

Prologue

251 years have passed since the Great tragedy that led to the reshaping of the world.

251 years have passed since the Great battle at the gates of Necrothreat against the Necrothreaders.

251 years have passed since the Great sorrow of Armok for the losses of Necrothreat...

The world has since been reshaped and the survivors of the old races have rebuild, ready to forgo their ancient creed

and create a new one. It was exactly 251 years after the reshaping of the World from Armok's sorrow that those that perished at the battle of Necrothreat were revived at the First of Granite. This is a story

of Greatness and Sadness,

of Tragedy and Glory,

of Forumites and Necrothreaders,

and this is *their* story.

Chapter II of the Necrothreat Chronicles

"Where the blood and ashes are we?" asked a forumite upon getting up from the hole in which he was lying.

"No idea, BFEL." said another forumite in response. "Weren't we at Necrothreat, fighting a battle which spelled our doom a moment ago?"

"That we were, Apiks." answered yet another forumite whilst analysing the situation with apparent great concentration. "I remember fighting the hordes of enemies when I fell to them."

"But Highmax28, that's impossible. You say you fell to the enemy but yet here we a--" as BFEL said that, a cloud of smoke appeared in the middle of them all. They were 7 forumites in total.

All members of Necrothreat before it fell. As the smoke began to clear, a shape was starting to take shape. The shape of it was unlike anything they've ever seen. It was a man.

But no normal man that clear to them.

The man was twice as tall as a normal Forumite and was looking quite gentlemanly, something that can't be said about a lot of forumites, with a suit and necktie to define him, bowler hat to hide that bald patch he obviously was trying so hard to hide and a

black walking stick curved on the edge as a handle and a white colouring on the edge of it exactly where it touched the ground.

Everyone was gaping. Whether it was because of his sudden appearance or because of his appearance, it is not known. Most probably because of both. After all, how often do you get to see a man wearing a suit that was the stuff of legends and looking so elegantly. The man spread his hands slowly and said:

"Greetings survivors of Necrothreat! I see you made the journey well. I am a messenger of Armok. My name is James. The almighty and all great Armok was shaken after your defeat in Necrothreat at the hand of that Necrothreader. As such the world has been reshaped due to his sorrow. My leader - Armok - has seen it fit to revive you and all other from Necrothreat in hopes of you rebuilding a new Necrothreat and -I quote- kick those sorry good for nothing Necrothreaders straight up the point of no return.

Now, you might notice that there are only 7 of you at the moment, but fear not, my lord has seen it fit that more and more former members of Necrothreat to be revived with the more and more people you gather. The reason for that is so that you do not get too much attention from the world as at the moment it is in a very picky situation. There are wars everywhere, Necrothreaders spreading chaos by reviving the dead and terrorizing the countryside and Goblins that loot everything in their sight. Many of the victims from these actions will seek refuge. They will come here as they will be guided by the hand of Armok. The reason for my lord's involvement in all of this is that he is sensing a great disturbance, a disturbance that might as well create the same ripple in the world as happened exactly 251 years when Necrothreat fell. My lord has the following message to you:

'Greetings citizens of Necrothreat. I am on a tight schedule with watching the world so I will be short. Evil forces are gathering and I expect a major event to happen. I want you to build a new Necrothreat as to serve the purpose of being the last bastion of the world if it comes to the worst. You must prepare for the worst. We cannot risk it happening. You will be the last and first line of defence if it comes to it. That is all. P.S. I am a big fan! I can't wait to hear of your exploits!'. That is all my master has ordered to be sent. If there are any news of anything new, I suspect my master will send me to inform you. Good luck and may you succeed, lest we fail."

With that said, James disappeared into yet another cloud of smoke. The forumites stood there dumbstruck for a good amount of time when Sprin the Mad Doctor said: "So why are we standing like somebody stuffed frogs into our mouths? We've gotta get these legs cu... I mean moving! Chop, chop. I want a lab to be built and be supplied with test subjects."

"Shut up Sprin, we've got plenty of time on a fine not extremely weird day such as this one." said NAV as he was starting to move up to the wagon that appeared mysteriously along with James.

"Sprin does have a point about getting settled up though, I think it'll be a good idea to give roles to each of us."

"Fine, fine Apiks." a smirk moved up to NAV's face "So care for YOU to give US the roles?"

"Of course, I - Apiks, will be the miner as I always was, BFEL will be the one in charge of any new lads we get and the carpenter, Misko27 will be the Mason who will build our necessities, Mastahcheese is only good with cheese but he will have to be our Cook. I hope you can use more than Cheese in your field, Mastahcheese. Sprin can't be convinced obviously to do anything else, unless we want broken legs, so he'll stick with doing what he best can do. Being the doctor. I have the feeling we will need one. Highmax28 will be in charge of our security and defence. I trust you can do that, Highmax28. I know you are extremely skilful of the sword so I will try to supply you with one."

"As for you, NAV." Said Apiks with an extremely toothy grin and started saying something else at the edge of laughter

"You will be getting what everyone wants. This means that you will be hauling exactly what everyone wants, put it on the correct spot and trade with any merchants that we might come across." Apiks could not contain herself anymore so she bursted into a fit of laughter and even managed to get chuckles from everyone else.

"Well bollocks." said quietly NAV as he looked at everyone pale faced.

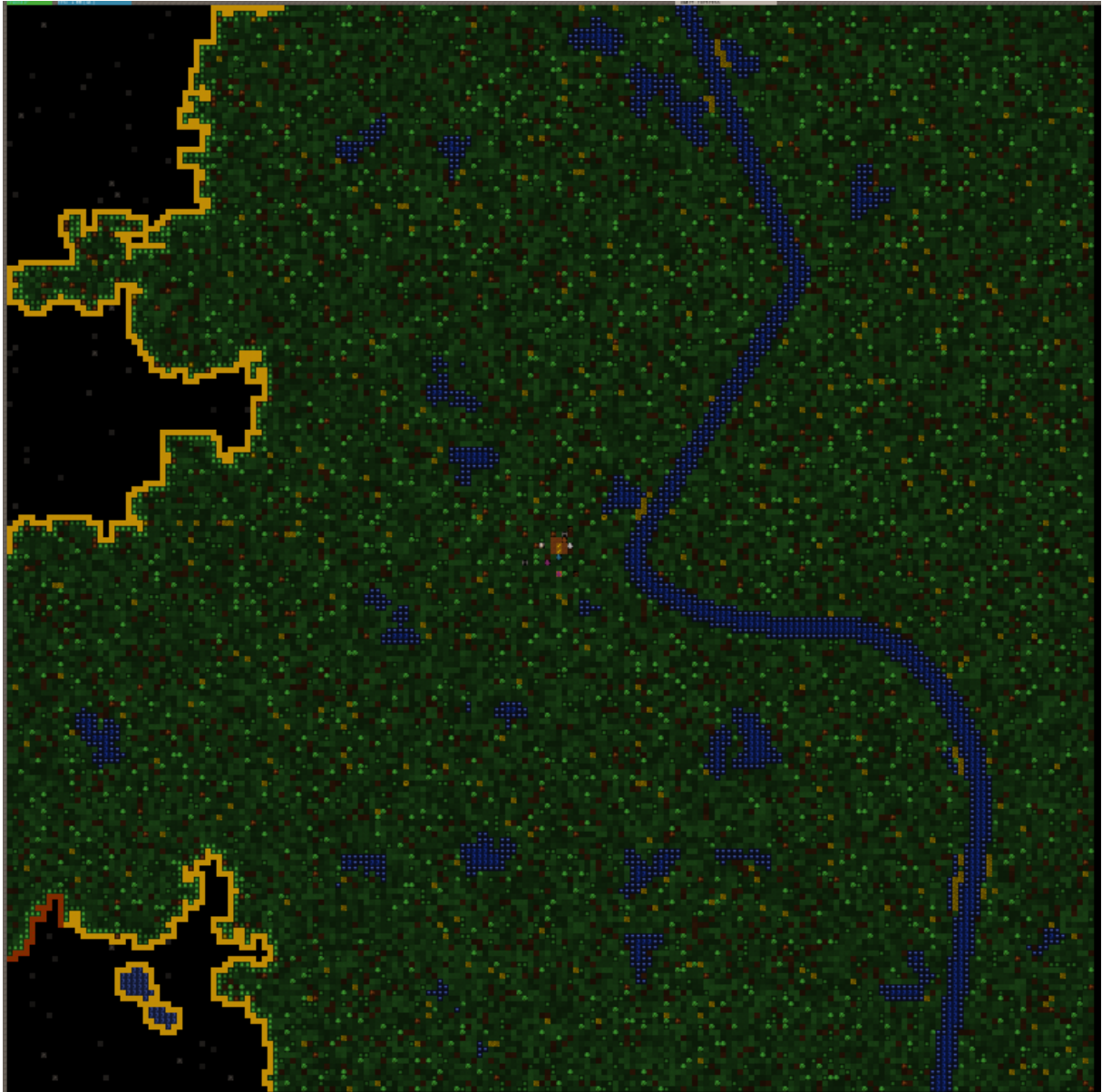
Chapter I

The Rule of Apiks, the Boring

Apiks' Journals

1st of Granite, 251

Just like my husband from the last age of Necrothreat, I will be this Necrothreat's first overseer. I will quickly have to establish ourselves in these lands. From what I can see, there are SAND mountains again. I hope at least there aren't any aquifers here. My husband had many problems with them which cost him a lot of time and a forumite. Other than that there is just a river and a few lakes here and there close to the river. The land seems good for settling.



Well then. First thing's first. I shall start mining into the mountains to create a hub for us to evolve into. Meanwhile BFEL will gather us some wood and the rest will be set upon gathering herbs and berries for our extended survival. All of this shall be in the memory of my husband Apiks! This is what he would've wanted and I will make sure it is seen complete.

2nd of Granite

What? There are no berries in these lands? Curses! This might prove disastrous. We have to find a second source of food A S A P.

4th of Granite

A squad has been formed under the leadership of Highmax28. It currently consists of only him but I suspect it will grow larger as more people come streaming in just like James said.

10th of Granite

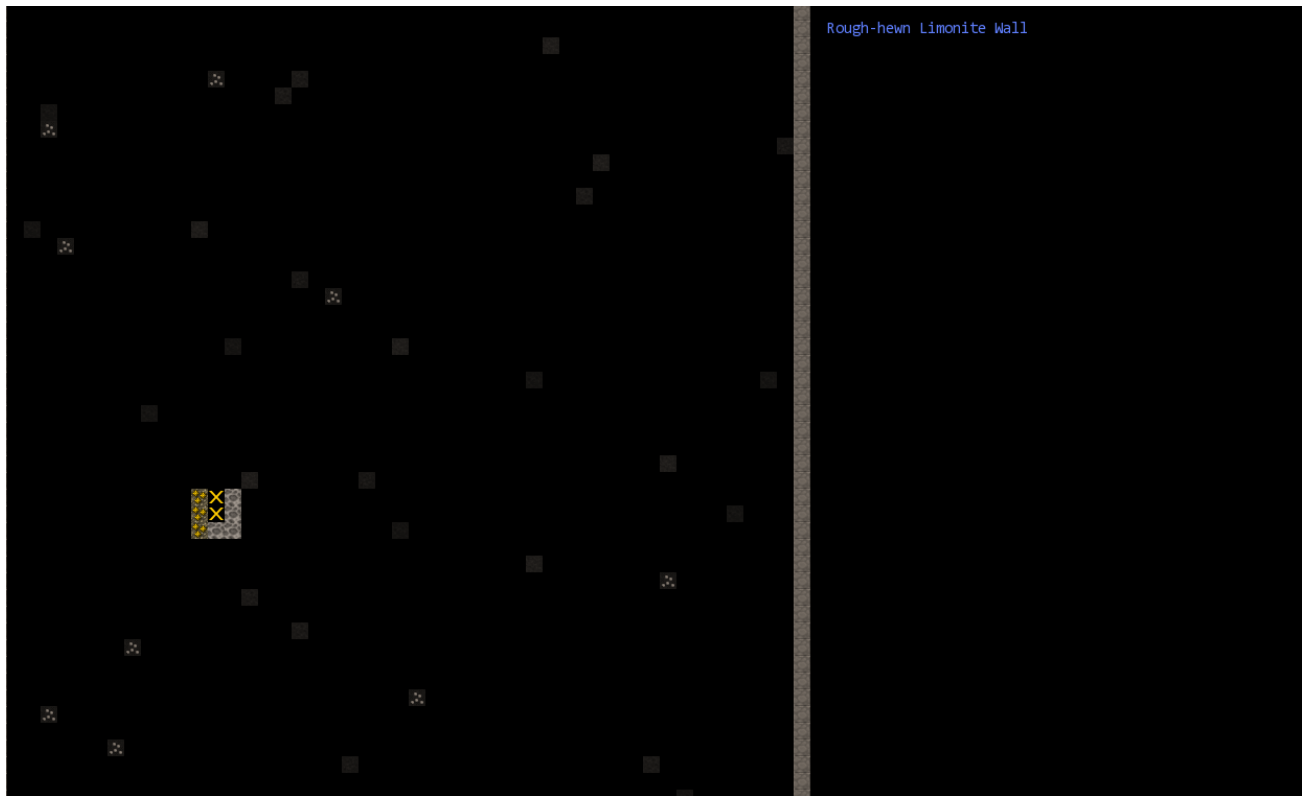
Yes! Our storage room has been completed and supplies are being taken in. This couldn't have been done without, I regret saying this... NAV's help when he picked up a pick and started mining. It seems hauling just ain't fitting his job description he said. Pfh. Show off. Anyway, we have started work on digging deeper with hopes of reaching stone.

13th of Granite

I have relieved myself of hauling duty so that I can concentrate on plans and mining the rest of the fortress which takes priority over quantity in hauling. I have also temporary excused NAV in hauling until he builds the stairs going downwards into the depths of the earth and potentially building other buildings that we have need of.

16th of Granite

Success! We have managed to hit limonite and jet. This means that for the moment we have a stable supply of stone and no aquifer to defy us! This is the first step to greatness. I have begun mining a large quantity in it with hopes of managing to create proper accommodations for all of us. Armok knows that we all have strained backs because of everything that has happened with us recently. I have also ordered a farm plot to be built since we will need the food due to the low number of cherry bushes that are nearby which account to well... zero. This farm plot will help us in our exploits a great deal I sense.



17th of Granite

Today Mastahcheese came to me and told me that to build a farm plot we need someone with knowledge of farming. I asked him what sort of a joke this is and he made a counter joke to me. Making jokes with my jokes, eh? Well after that I made HIM the lead farmer so that he can build his farming plot. I hope we get better farmers soon. I wouldn't want to be eating stuff from his farms soon.

24th of Granite

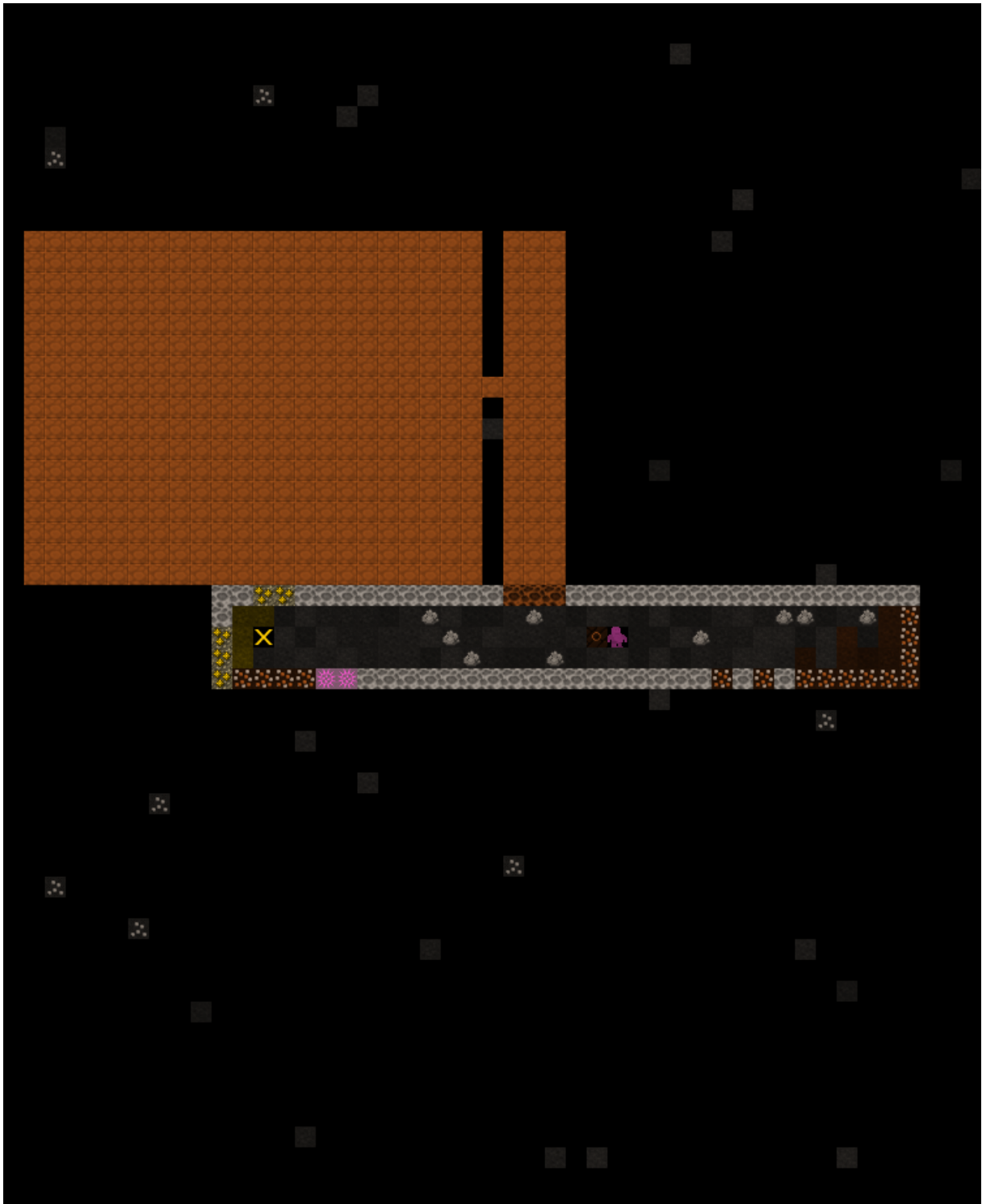
Workshops have begun to be built per my order. This is most excellent due to the need of furniture that we have at the moment. I WILL make sure this fort succeeds even if it costs me my life. There's probably more lives than just mine at stake.

1st of Slate

We have managed to survive the first month. This is most excellent. I have ordered some restraints to be built at the fortress' entrance to put off any intruders we might have of small calibre. Everything at the moment is going according to plan. Workshops are being built, the farms are completed and being populated with crops. Only complaints so far are that we have too little storage space. I will have to address

that this month. I have added traffic paths so that we can be a little better organised. Organisation at its finest! Also I think that BFEL is abusing his powers a little. He recently threatened me to hurry up. The fool! We have plenty of time. If only my efficient husband was here...





8th of Slate

Curses! Rats have manifested themselves. We will have to move our food stock to a separate storage room soon. Very soon at that! Doors are also being placed all throughout the fortress at my order as well.



11 of Felsite

It is completed! The new storage room is done. Now let's see those rats get in. This is the beginning of the expansion and accommodations of Necrothreat as we know it. It is most excellent. Everybody seems happy at the moment which is somewhat weird considering that we have to sleep on the floor. But that matters little! I am happy!



21st of Felsite

Our farm has begun to ripen! This means that we have begun getting food. This is very good. We will not starve. I am sure the others will be delighted to hear of this. We still have not gotten any of these people that seek refuge that James mentioned but I do not fear. They will come soon enough. I also have given orders to begun making a place for the future traders that might come to us.

27th of Felsite

The kitchen has almost been completed! Finally, Mastahcheese can get to cooking in a quality kitchen. He will rejoice when I tell him these news, I am sure. Everything has been quite quiet these days. I worry. It's never been so quiet, even in the old Necrothreat. But does it matter? This means that we finally can reap the benefits of the good days!



20th of Hematite

The Trade Depot has been completed! This means we can start getting traders now. This is most excellent as we are in need of supplies.



22nd of Hematite

They have arrived! Migrants have arrived. Much needed hands have arrived. This is most excellent! This will boost our productivity great deal! I will have to inspect to see what each is good at and place them at work. Hurrah! They amount to the total of... *two*? WHAT? ONLY FOUR HANDS HAVE COME TO AID US? BLOOD AND ASHES! I must keep calm. What if my husband was to see me now? Well nevermind. I have asked the names of these new bloods and they tell me that their names are Jables and Splint respectively. Jables tells me that she is good with range whilst Splint is good with whatever we put him at work. Both have been initiated into the militia led by Highmax28. It seems that they are married which means that they have good cooperation.

I hope we can survive the winter at this rate... I hope the merchants bring good much needed supplies... I hope we even last more than last time.

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■Jables■ Kilrud■mid has been quite content lately■
She is married to Mafoi Chewedtreaty■
She is a citizen of The Labor of Chanting■ She is a member of The
Barricade of Celebrating■ She is a former member of The Rope of
Consideration■ She is a former member of The Elevated Bejeweled Towers■ She
arrived at Ugitthgelut on the 22nd of Hematite in the year 251■
She is eighty-four years old born on the 1st of Granite in the year
167■
She is incredibly muscular■ Her eyes are cobalt■ Her somewhat short
broad ears are fuse-lobed■ Her teeth are gapped■ Her somewhat broad head is
short■ Her very long hair is braided■ Her pale brown skin is wrinkled■ Her
hair is pumpkin with a touch of gray■
She is mighty and very rarely sick but she is flimsy■
■Jables■ Kilrud■mid likes serpentine■ copper■ resin■ opal■ naked mole
dog leather■ peach-faced lovebird tooth■ the color clear■ and scepters■ When
possible she prefers to consume longfin mako shark■ lungfish■ dwarven wine
and sheep's milk■ She absolutely detests worms■
She has a natural inclination toward language but she has a large
deficit of willpower■
She often feels discouraged■ She is very assertive■ She prefers
familiar routines■ She is not straightforward when dealing with others■ She
is confident■ She takes time when making decisions■ She stammers when she's
annoyed■ She needs alcohol to get through the working day■
A short■ sturdy creature fond of Bay12■
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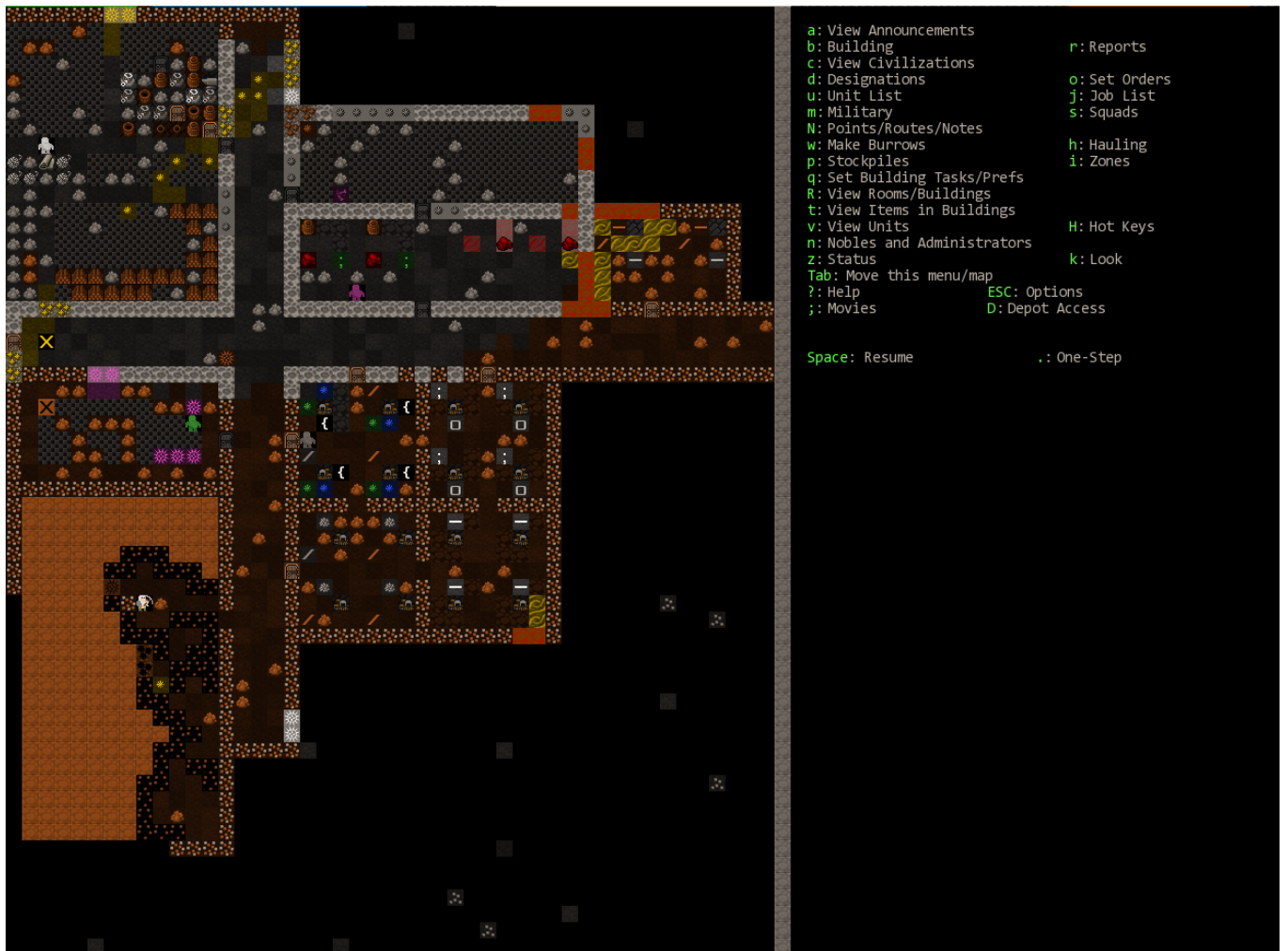
Splint Zursilral has been quite content lately. He is married to Jables Bronzelisten. He is a citizen of The Labor of Chanting. He is a member of The Barricade of Celebrating. He is a former member of The Elevated Bejeweled Towers. He arrived at Ugithgelut on the 22nd of Hematite in the year 251. He is ninety-one years old, born on the 1st of Granite in the year 160. He is muscular and fat. His very long sideburns are braided. His very long moustache is neatly combed. His medium-length beard is braided. His very short hair is neatly combed. He has a recessed chin. His somewhat short ears are broad. His cobalt eyes are slightly sunken. His head is broad. His nose bridge is slightly convex. His hair is pumpkin with some gray. His skin is cinnamon. He is strong, but he is slow to heal and quick to tire. Splint Zursilral likes limonite, tin, pink jade, mail, shirts, scepters, and rhinoceros beetle demons for their bloated appearance. When possible, he prefers to consume lion, tamarin and sunshine. He absolutely detests snails. He has an iffy memory. He has a calm demeanor. He often feels discouraged. He isn't given to flights of fancy. He greatly appreciates art and natural beauty. He is eager for new experiences. He admires tradition. He is organized. He needs alcohol to get through the working day.

A short, sturdy creature fond of Bay12.

I have ordered more farm plots to be built as well.

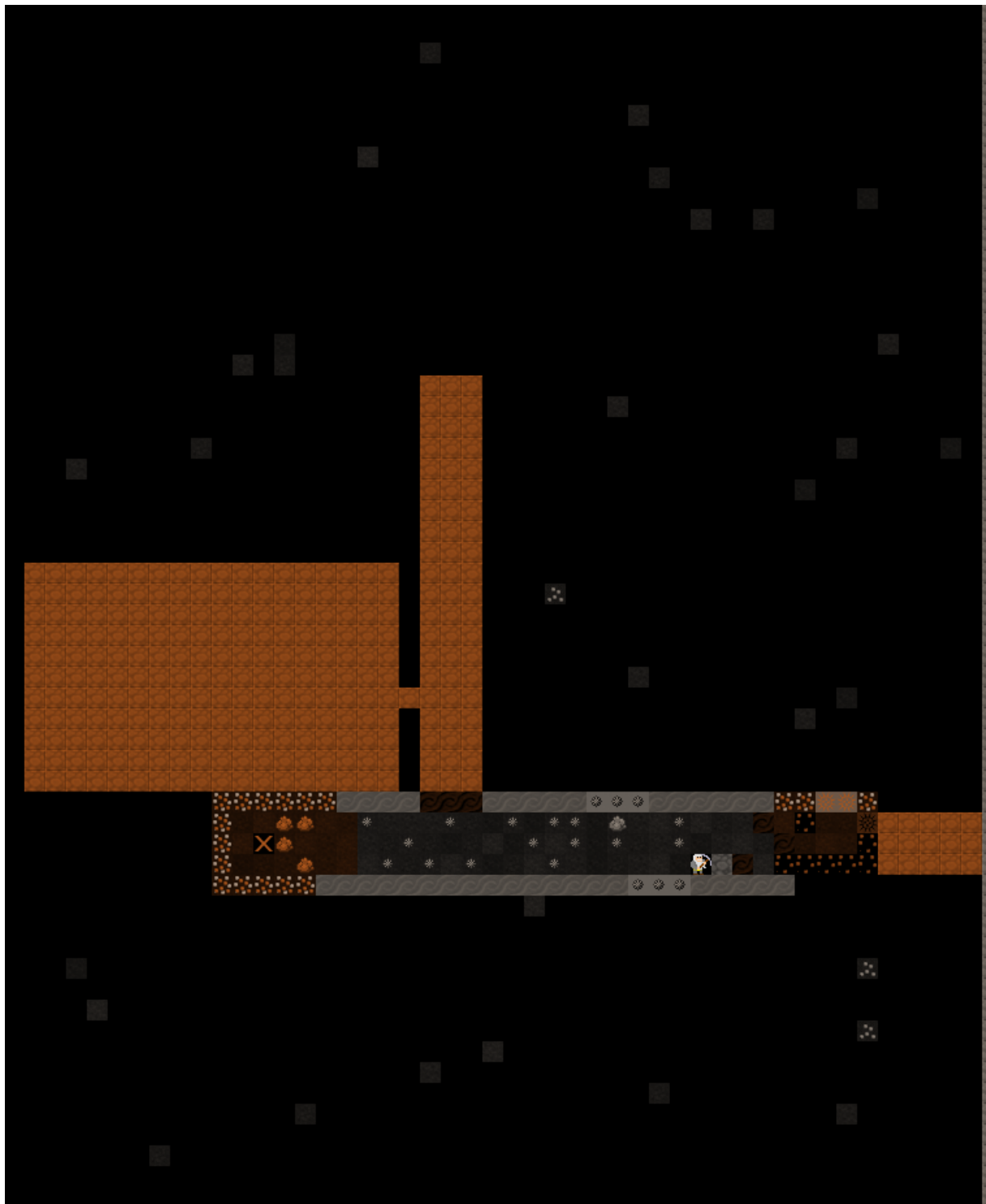
15th of Malachite

I have told Jables to begin cutting gems at our newly constructed workshop area so that we have something to sell when the traders come. Everything up till now is normal. No enemies, no accidents, no nothing. It worries me but we shall make use of it. I have also ordered the making of a dining room for us.



25th of Malachite

I have ordered the making of a room for the military to stay in. It will be on the 4th floor bottom so that it can reach the first floor quickly.



2nd of Galena

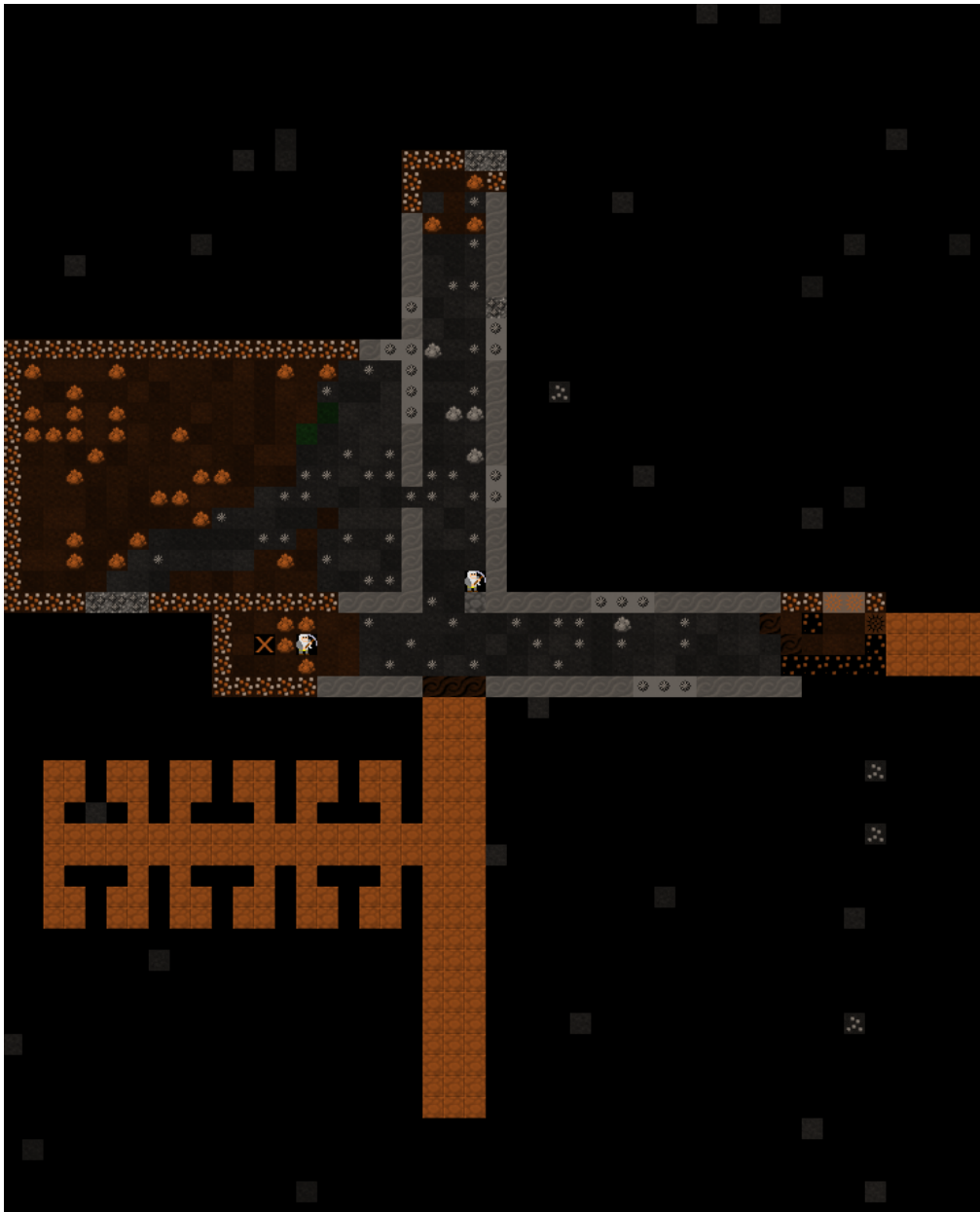
I have started giving out titles to everybody today. The current ranks are the following:

site founder
militia commander
moderator
banhammerer
manager
chief medical dwarf
broker
archiver
militia captain

`BFEL' Thobgoden, site founder
`Highmax28' Seshalâth, militia commander
`Apiks' Nobkol, Miner
VACANT
VACANT
`SPRIN' kumkab, MAD DOCTOR
`NAV' Danmanoddod, Miner
VACANT
NEW

8th of Galena

I have ordered the makings of our rooms so that we can finally have a place to sleep and not on the ground as we have done all of these months. They are right below where the military rooms are.



21st of Galena

Somebody today told me that if any traders come, they will not be able to pass! When I gave it a closer inspection I confirmed. This is disastrous! As such I have ordered for it to be immediately fixed.

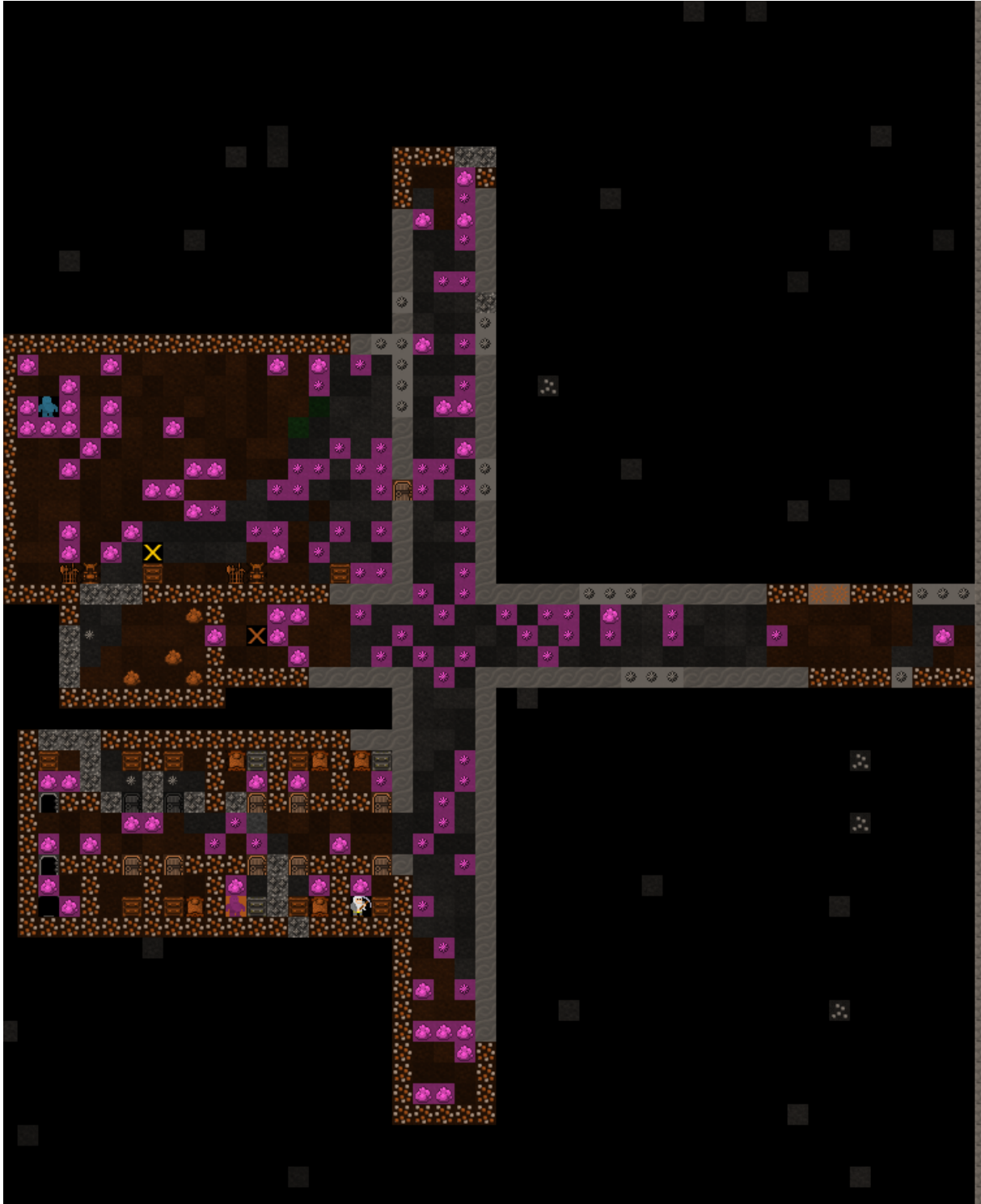
5th of Limestone

It would seem that our dog that have been posted to defend the entrance of the fort have given birth to a puppy! This is wonderful news! Aww look at it so cutely looking into my eyes. I sense that he shall become a great fighter and champion of the fort!



15th of Limestone

Everything of stone attribute on the 4th floor is to be put in the dumpster. I issued that order today. We will be busy for quite some time. Accommodations are almost done. Our carpenter refuses to work for unknown to me reasons so I let him be. "Break time." he says. Humph.





20th of Limestone

I was told that today new migrants have arrived! Hurrah for more hands to work! I was told that we have gotten the total amount of... *two*? *facepalm* This must be a bad joke. We got another 4 hands. This brings the total population to the shocking amount of 11. Ugh. They also married, just like the last two migrants. It seems that they probably think this is a good place to spend their honeymoon. I will make sure it is not. They are named LtAlfred and his wife InsanityIncarnate. I will put LtAlfred in the military per his wish. It seems I am destined to make due with as little forumites as we have. I will succeed in the name of my husband!

InsanityIncarnate Althnash has been quite content lately. She is married to Thob Polishgold. She is a citizen of The Labor of Chanting. She is a member of The Barricade of Celebrating. She is a former member of The Infallible Road. She arrived at Ugithgelut on the 20th of Limestone in the year 251. She is eighty-two years old, born on the 1st of Granite in the year 169. She is fat. Her teeth are widely-spaced. Her hair is curly. Her medium-length hair is braided. Her very short ears are extraordinarily broad. Her eyebrows are extremely long. Her cobalt eyes are slightly wide-set. Her nose is slightly hooked. Her hair is pumpkin with a touch of gray. Her skin is pale taupe. Her lips are slightly thick. She is tough, but she is slow to heal, susceptible to disease and clumsy. InsanityIncarnate Althnash likes andesite, tin, star ruby, the color green, derails and scepters. When possible, she prefers to consume mussel, dwarven ale, tapir's milk and Longland flour. She absolutely detests worms. She has an amazing spatial sense, a good feel for social relationships and good intuition, but she has a shortage of patience. She is self-conscious. She occasionally overindulges. She is assertive. She is relaxed. She loves a good thrill. She is guarded in relationships with others. She finds rules confining. When she's bored, she constantly rolls her eyes. She gnaws on her cheek when she's excited. She needs alcohol to get through the working day.

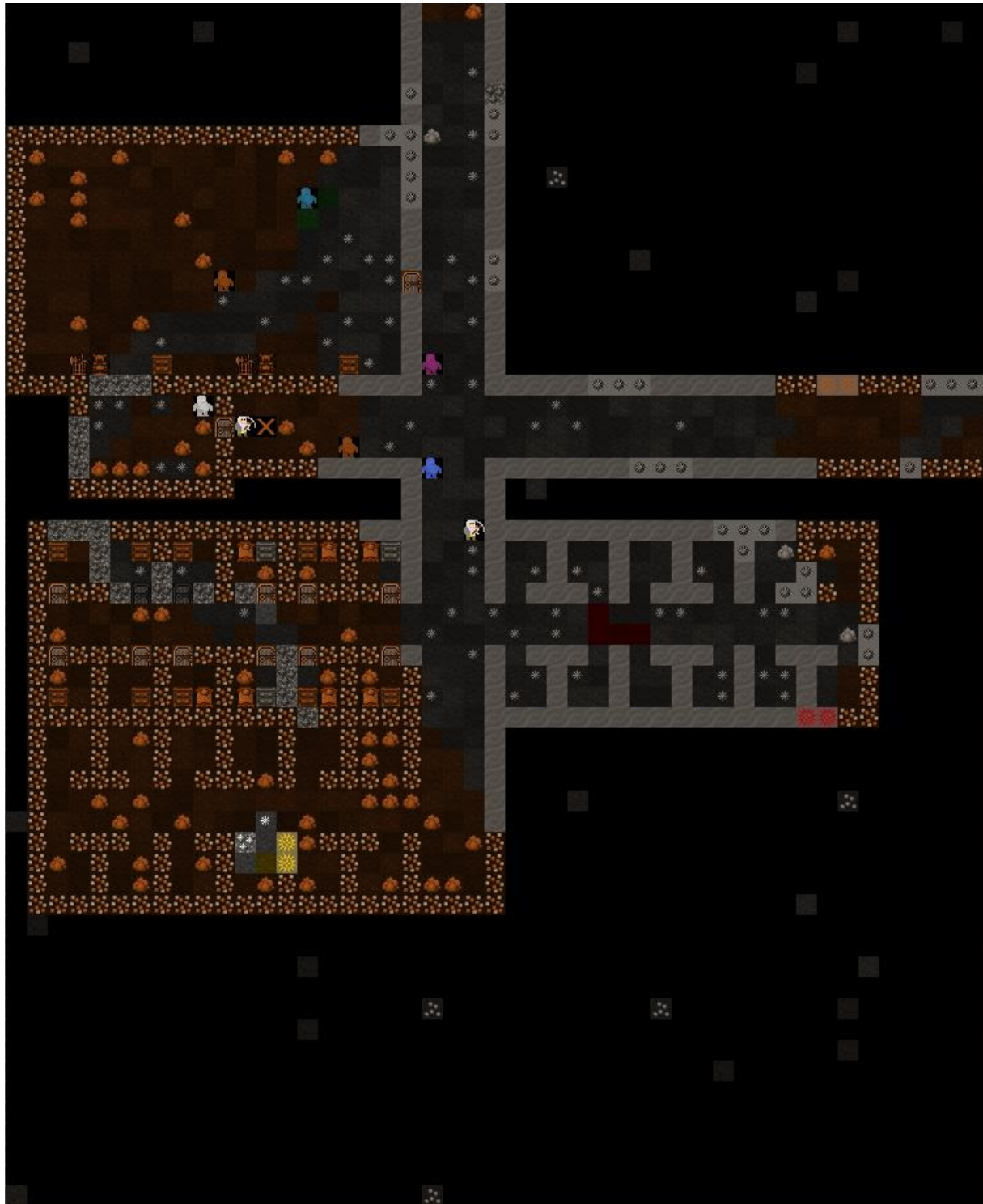
A short, sturdy creature fond of Bay12.

LtAlfred Delethlimul has been quite content lately. He is married to InsanityIncarnate Bolttraded. He is a citizen of The Labor of Chanting. He is a member of The Barricade of Celebrating. He is a former member of The Boat of Whipping. He is a former member of The Infallible Road. He arrived at Ugithgelut on the 20th of Limestone in the year 251. He is seventy-six years old, born on the 1st of Granite in the year 175. His very long sideburns are braided. His long moustache is neatly combed. His medium-length beard is braided. His hair is clean-shaven. He is average in size. His eyes are cobalt. He has a very broad chin. His nose is slightly hooked. His ears are somewhat broad. His skin is tan. He is rarely sick. LtAlfred Delethlimul likes kaolinite, bronze, fire agate, demon rat leather, quivers, earrings and anvils. When possible, he prefers to consume python, sole and bumblebee mead. He absolutely detests mosquitos. He has great creativity, but he has poor analytical abilities, poor empathy and a poor ability to manage or understand social relationships. He is quick to anger. He is comfortable in social situations. He feels strong urges and seeks short-term rewards. He is somewhat reserved. He doesn't need thrills or risks in life. He dislikes intellectual discussions. He dislikes helping others. He is confident. He finds rules confining. He talks to himself when he's annoyed. He needs alcohol to get through the working day. He does not mind being outdoors, at least for a time.

A short, sturdy creature fond of Bay12.

6th of Sandstone

Today I removed the dump order. It is too time inefficient. On the other hand, 3 separate areas for sleeping have been made for future efforts. I can feel that they will be useful.

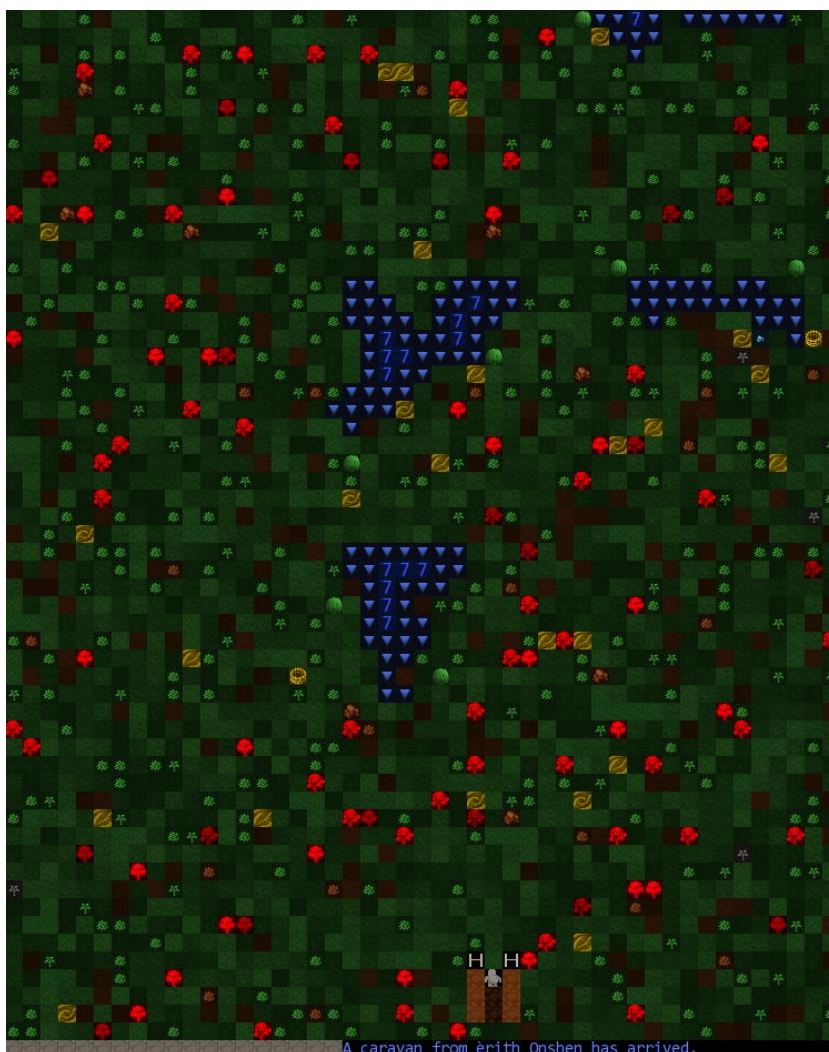


2nd of Timber

The order of the making of two statues for the entrance of Necrothreat have been issued. They will show that we do have a certain level of civilization and is worth trading with us. These past months since we've arrived have been uneventful. This is good since we did need to settle in. All that we are in need at the moment is more forumites to do the job. No traders have arrived so far. I hope they will this month as they did before in the previous Necrothreat. Otherwise we might be in for a rough Winter.

13th of Timber

Hurrah! The outpost liaison of other of our kind that have survived the breaking have come. This is most excellent. Now we can establish trade and relationships with the world and spread word of our safe hub. When the traders settle in, I shall immediately set upon getting some food, ale, swords for our troops and other much needed stuff! This could potentially be the best thing that has happened all year long. I have also promoted Mastahcheese to the level of banhammerer. I believe he could put those forumites into shape to work.



7th of Moonstone

I issued the order of the making of my office and place of living. The negotiations with the traders were successful. We have secured a stable supply of food and drinks as well as a few military things. What we need now is more forumites as I mentioned. Everything is going fine so far. No enemies have shown up which worries me.



23rd of Moonstone

Thief! A thief has infiltrated our fortress! A kobold thief no less! Thankfully, the dogs that I have placed on the entrance should do their job and at least scare the invader away.



25th of Moonstone

sigh Another thief has appeared right at our doorstep. This time he is a different one. Once again he was scared away by the dogs.

26th of Moonstone

What's going on here? Are we under siege by kobolds with less brains than rats? Today another Kobold thief came into sight just hours after the last one ran away. The dogs make quick work in scaring them so they'll get extra treats from me.

9th of Opal

It's Mid-Winter and nothing interesting has happened this past year except a few kobolds. I think I will retire of my role of leading this place when Spring comes. My husband came to me in a dream and told me to do so and so I shall. But there is about 2 months until then. Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Everything is working out fine I guess as far as everything is concerned.







'InsanityIncarnate' Aláthnish, Craftsddwarf

* 'InsanityIncarnate' Bolttraded



Construct Building

Novice Tanner

Novice Brewer

Novice Miller

Dabbling Grower

Great Wood Crafter

Great Glazer

Great Wax Worker

Expert Persuader

Dabbling Negotiator

Dabbling Judge of Intent

Nothing has happened. I leave my place to the next overseer with these points for him to follow if he wishes.

- Furnish the dining room beneath the gem storage room
- Fix our farming issues
- Get out military actually up and going
- Make some defences in case something happens (like traps)
- GET RID OF ALL THAT STONE LYTING ABOUT THE BASE! I've gotten rid of half of it but the rest remain.
- Finish everything else that is currently in progress

And may Armok protect us, for we all know we'll need it!

Chapter II

The Rule of Highmax, The Sword Enthusiast

Journal of Highmax:

1st Granite, 252:

It's been a year since we all awoke and were told by that funny man about being reborn. I didn't remember what happened until recently.

I kept thinking: we died? When?

Only a few nights ago did I remember the blood, the carnage, and the endless dead swarming us all. I remember the falling walls, the evil creatures in the depths, the legions of the dead murdering all those I knew, and...

...And being devoured by that beast...

It still haunts my dreams. Now I remember, and I keep my sword on me all the time now, with constant worry that the dead will surround us all again. The constant screams still ring in my ears... The Apiks reunited hand in hand in death (I guess they didn't understand "Til death do us part").

Today I was still pondering this when Apiks approached me. She came by and asked if we could talk for a bit. I really had no choice since she's the overseer. I asked her what she wanted to ask. And in my mind, I kept that gruesome image in my head of her dead corpse among those dead... I kept a tight grip on my blade at this point just from the pain of those thoughts. She then asked me to take over as the new overseer. I was so surprised, I put my guard down and was left stunned. Me? Overseer?

"I'm just a soldier. I've only ever commanded a squad of ten with me included." I told her.

"And that is why I chose you. We need defences against the dead if what James said was right"

James... That was the funny man's name?

She pulled out a piece of paper with some instructions on it.

"If you need some guidelines, start with these tasks. It's what I would do if I wasn't told by everyone else I'm so boring"

I chuckled at this and took the paper and shoved it in my pocket.

"I'll do what I can" I told her saluting her. I walked away and began my duties.

2nd of Granite, 252:

I have taken a survey of the place. It's definitely not the same as before and severely undermanned with only 11 forumites. I decided we need more resources... And by resources I mean swords. How many do we have? We don't know? Well let's change that. We need to wait for someone who can count things to arrive, because I don't think anyone here can count past ten... I don't know why... One thing I also noticed: WHO ON EARTH MADE THE WORKSHOPS ON TOP OF THE QUARTERS!?!?!? Does one not realise that workshops are LOUD. This will make us all very tired from not sleeping well! I decided to make the bedrooms under it a stockpile for furniture. I also designed some rooms for the nobles. Who said Apiks gets the best room in the house and we lesser nobles get little hovels? Not I! I made four for now. One for me, one for NAV, one for BFEL, and one for whoever our archiver will be (I hope they come soon... I need a sword count!). I am also going to clean up all the crap in the dining room once I start getting some stuff organized. I'm also thinking about making some traps and a better military. Problem is, I need another lacke- I mean recruit to spar with our friends here. I'm also digging straight to the 100th Z-Level. Get some more room to build things. And maybe find something interesting... Like marble or some other flux stone for BETTER SWORDS!!!! AND MAGMA! Gotta have magma... Or we can just get lots of charcoal... But that'd piss of those elves... Wait, WHO CARES? I don't care about no damn elf! Hell, I killed some back in Glidesnarls! If they show their ugly heads here, I'll just make sure they get the message: WE DONT LIKE ELVES.

23rd of Granite, 252:

NAV and Apiks came up to me to report something of interest:



I looked over the reports and also found this inside of it:

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You have struck kimberlite!  
You have struck orthoclase!  
'LtAlfred' Delethlimul, Tanner cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet  
spawn.  
You have discovered an expansive cavern deep underground.  
→You have discovered a downward passage.
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I was dumbfounded. What the Hell is a downward passage? I ordered up that section of stair leading to it to be walled off, NEVER TO BE OPENED AGAIN. Whatever comes out of that passage can't be good news. I saw all the gold and stuff in the walls from their reports and I told them we can't risk it. There's an ample supply of water down there that we might use one day for a well, but I'm not going NEAR there until we know what's down there.

6th Slate, 252:

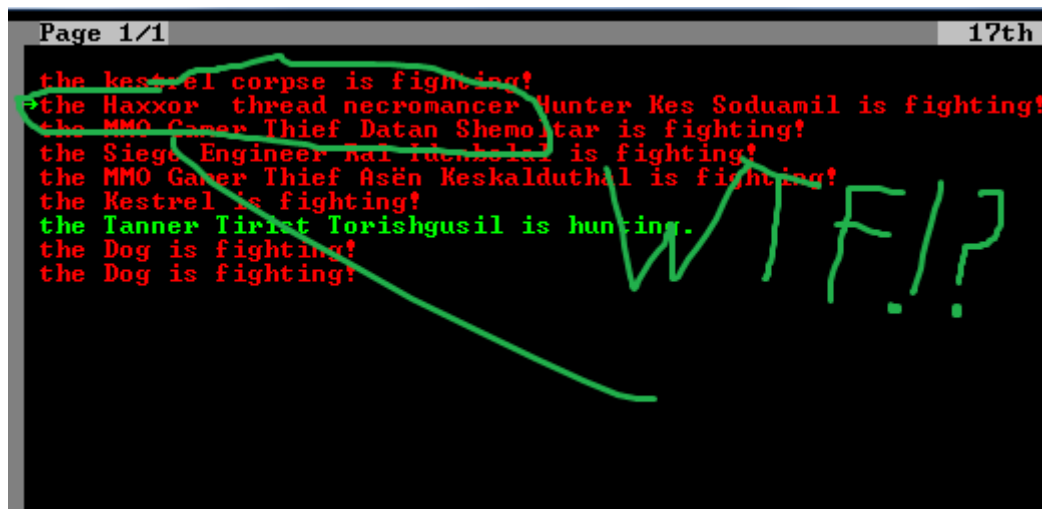
Apiks and NAV came running and started talking over and over and panicking. I told them both to calm down and then tell me calmly one at a time. Apiks told me they hit yet ANOTHER cavern. Great! Another one! Right when we got the first one walled off! Wall off any way to that floor and dig around again... If I hit another cavern and still don't find magma I will not be pleased. On the bright side, we found out where the downward passage leads to. And we have quite a bit of native and horn silver and native gold. Gold sarcophagus anyone? How about some monuments of the old world made here? *pen splotches here and there, next page has writing*
I dropped my pen and spilled my ink upon remembering those horrible thoughts. Nothing of the old world will be glorious. There is only death in that world... And only death will come if we continue as they did...

13th of Slate, 252:

BFEL just ran in on me during my training session and shouted he can see friends coming from the south. I sheathed my sword and ran out to greet them. We need all the hands we can get to deal with this place. I ran out to greet them all one by one, thinking we will get about four or five pairs of hands when I saw what appeared to be an entire crowd rushing towards us. I grabbed BFEL but his collar and yelled in his face. "I THOUGHT YOU TOLD ME THERE WERE FRIENDS! NOT AN ATTACK!" I drew my sword, ready to break the siege when I saw a forumite man come. I sheathed my sword. Well now, that was stupid of me wasn't it? I did end up greeting all of them... All 25 of them... And they brought 11 animals with us, some of them strays... MEATS BACK ON THE MENU TONIGHT!

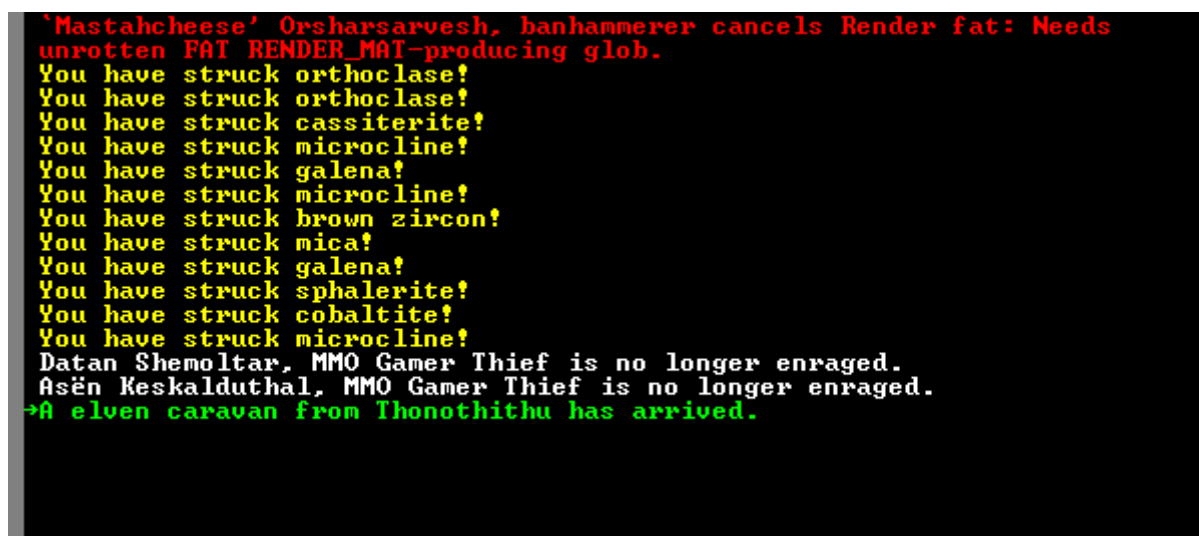
17th of Felsite, 252:

Something utterly terrifying has arrived:



Armok have mercy on our souls...

Moments later I received other news.



WHY ARMOK WHY!?!?!?!? WHY!?!?!? WHYYYYYYYYY!!!!?!?!?!?!?

20th of Hematite, 252:

The letters are sharp and jumpy, as if he was shaking

I'm safe in here... No one can find me... No one... I'll wait it out... Yes, wait it out... We may have captured ONE thread necromancer, but there's more... Oh yes there is more... They call me mad to think there's more... Oh there's more all right... And more will come! Trust me... We have resources and weapons... And I placed sentry bears... Bears you ask? How did we get bears? We stole them... Yes, stole them... From those pointy eared freaks... They had two bears... Male and female... Lots of bears now... yes... Make an army... Yes... Kill the dead with bears... hehehehe.... That haxxor is still out there... I can hear him in the wind... I smell him in the air... I can taste his very essence.... It tastes

like blood... No that isn't my blood from biting my tongue in fear... He'll come back... Oh yes, he'll be back... And he'll murder us all... And no one will live... Just like before... We won't make it out alive... I elected some new guy to count everything... He counted and counted until he got me the numbers... Yes... The numbers of everything... I counted the swords... We have six... And they're all ELVISH MAKE!!!!

sharp scribbles are shown across the bottom part of the page, even ripping a lot of it

~~I WILL WATCH THOSE BASTARDS *rip*RN!!! HOW DARE THEY MAKE SUCH BEAUTIFUL *rip*LS AND MAKE THEM OUT OF SOMETHING*rip*RRIFYI*rip*!?!?! I'LL MAKE BLADES OUT OF IRON! SI*rip*! STEEL! I'LL SLAUGHTER EVERY ELVEN *rip*H IF I HAVE TO!!!!~~

rips and scribbles end

~~I WILL WATCH THOSE BASTARDS *rip*RN!!! HOW DARE THEY MAKE SUCH BEAUTIFUL *rip*LS AND MAKE THEM OUT OF SOMETHING*rip*RRIFYI*rip*!?!?! I'LL MAKE BLADES OUT OF IRON! SI*rip*! STEEL! I'LL SLAUGHTER EVERY ELVEN *rip*H IF I HAVE TO!!!!~~

I hear someone coming! That haxxor is coming down the corridor! I MUST HIDE!!!! HIDE!!!!

HIDE!

17th of Malachite, 252:

It was Apiks that found me hiding in the garbage dump under a bunch of stone, half insane and screaming about a haxxor thread necromancer. She had to knock me out and have Sprin have a look at me (although it's a mystery what he could do since Sprin is insane himself). They managed to help me so I can continue running the fortress. Sprin wanted an excuse to use his chainsaw but Apiks just did everything. Although it was NAV that found out what was wrong. She thought it was post-traumatic stress cause of the elves and the haxxor that she had seen herself. Sprin gave me some weird crap to drink and even though it tasted like crap, I'm not making mad ramblings. I'm glad there haven't been reports of the Haxxor for a couple months now. Maybe he got smart enough and ran away... *writing gets a little jumpy* or maybe... yes... he's hiding... hiding... and waiting... waiting to take us all out... *jumpy writing ends* Nonetheless I have ordered a ballista/catapult batter to be constructed on top of the fortress. No more severed heads and no more worries of the enemy coming and locking us in defenceless. I'm also making a bridge design, but the problem is we need to divert the river... And I was originally going to make a cistern for a well, but I will have to make due. In my mad ramblings, I did not lie however about the bears. We have two black bears, one male and one female. And I have put them in front of my trap array. Anything that tries to enter will be either mauled by bears OR caught in a trap. I'm going to order a clear cut of the forests around us and make charcoal. It's about time we have a properly armed military to go with our battery... On a good note, Insanity Incarnate has given birth to a baby boy! Does this make the boy son of insanity?

28th of Malachite, 252:

Jables has given birth to a baby girl. The ballista level of the battery is almost done. I just have to place the ballistae into the system itself and carve fortifications and we're good for that. I'm going to offset each one so we don't have friendly fire incidents.

12th of Galena, 252:

We captured a Troll today. It was trying to kidnap our babies and probably make unspeakable thread zombies with them... *Shudders* That's one less troll creating twisted monsters in the world... And rejoice! Humans have arrived! Unlike elves, Humans are much nicer to converse with. They don't care about trees, only making money! QUICK! START PUTTING RANDOM USELESS CRAP TO THE TRADE DEPOT!

16th of Galena, 252:

Two trolls were captured and one kobold ran off... I swear they must be- HOLY SHIT!



EVERYONE INSIDE! WE MUST SAVE OURSELVES FROM THE BEAST!!!! Damn bastards were leading this thing to us! I told Jables to go and get everyone inside. He came back to me five minutes later laughing. I grabbed her by the collar and yelled in her face "WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING!? THIS IS SERIOUS! IT WAS THINGS LIKE THOSE THAT MADE NECROTHREAT FALL!" she looked at me puzzled and replied:

“Sir... I’m laughing because it changed forms and ran away...”



I felt stupid because she wasn't around the time of the fall of Necrothreat. I apologized and told everyone to return to their duties. We need to get this battery up and running... I also finally ordered a clear cut of the forest to the south. We need as much wood as we can get, and quickly... I have also ordered several people to construct a sealing chamber for the thread necromancer. They may not be able to die of old age... But at least we can seal them for eternity. They prepared the room and are now placing the magic runes to keep the freak inside. We still need four statues of silver to keep him properly sealed if this book of magic says properly... If this works, we will never have to worry about this creature ever again! We also got some good trading in from the humans. We got lots of food, booze and most importantly: SWORDS!!!! We have an iron and copper sword now!!!!

13th of Limestone, 252:

We had another Troll come in, only this time it got killed instead of captured. This is bad. We NEED to get rid of it right now! If we don't get rid of that corpse *writing gets jumpy* he'll... he'll return... he can smell death on the wind... like I can smell him... and he'll come here... he'll come like lightning... faster than lightning even... No one will hear him... no one can see him... we will all die... must... get... rid... of... corpse...

jumpy handwriting stops

20th of Limestone, 252:

My 2IC withdrew from society today. I'm worried, but I know Jables will be alright. On a positive note, we got the smelters working. I'll get a real military started once we get some weapons for everyone. I'm going to make some hammers, but most of our production will be swords. Yes, swords. We are going to have so many swords that if everyone had four hands there would still be enough swords for everyone and another hundred.

22nd of Limestone, 252:

Curses! Jables has claimed the only metalsmith's forge! We must comply to her terms if we are going to win it back. Shining metal bars? Stacked cloth? A quarry? That's what you want? Hmm... we'll figure this out...

23rd of Limestone, 252:

I was approached by another panic stricken citizen jumping up and down. They looked so scared I couldn't tell if they crapped themselves already or they are going to. I asked what happened and they said "Thieves! Thieves have come to steal our children!" I laughed a little. "They will run away as they always do." The lady stared at me with a look that meant dread.

"Sir... you don't understand... These are thread zombie thieves!"

I dropped everything and grabbed my sword and rallied the soldiers we have on hand and charged out. As soon as that zombie saw us coming, the farmer it was grabbing in its grip was slashed and he ran away. I went to the aid of the farmer as my allies ran after the zombie. I asked if they were hurt but they were fine. It seemed their robe made the dagger just glance away. We need to prepare for a much heavier assault... I need bridges up and running NOW.

15th of Sandstone, 252:

More migrants have arrived, bringing us to a total of 60 strong. We don't have magma however so arming us will require lots of trees burning... Which we're doing now. The statues for the sealing chamber are still put away because Jables can't find her stuff... I hope some traders come by soon... We need those silver statues done soon, I can hear the damned Necrothreader laughing...

6th of Timber, 252:

Jables went insane today. Child in hand and everything... Now we got a crazy soldier going around whipping around her baby. I'm going in to put her out of her misery... I'm sorry...

Later Entry

She killed her child by stabbing it over and over with her spear. I rushed in, sword in hand with others in my unit and we killed her. It was quick... I stabbed her in the head, making it quick and clean, and as hopefully painless as possible. The statues will be made, and we will seal that thread necromancer. I sense the damn thing is just a bad omen...

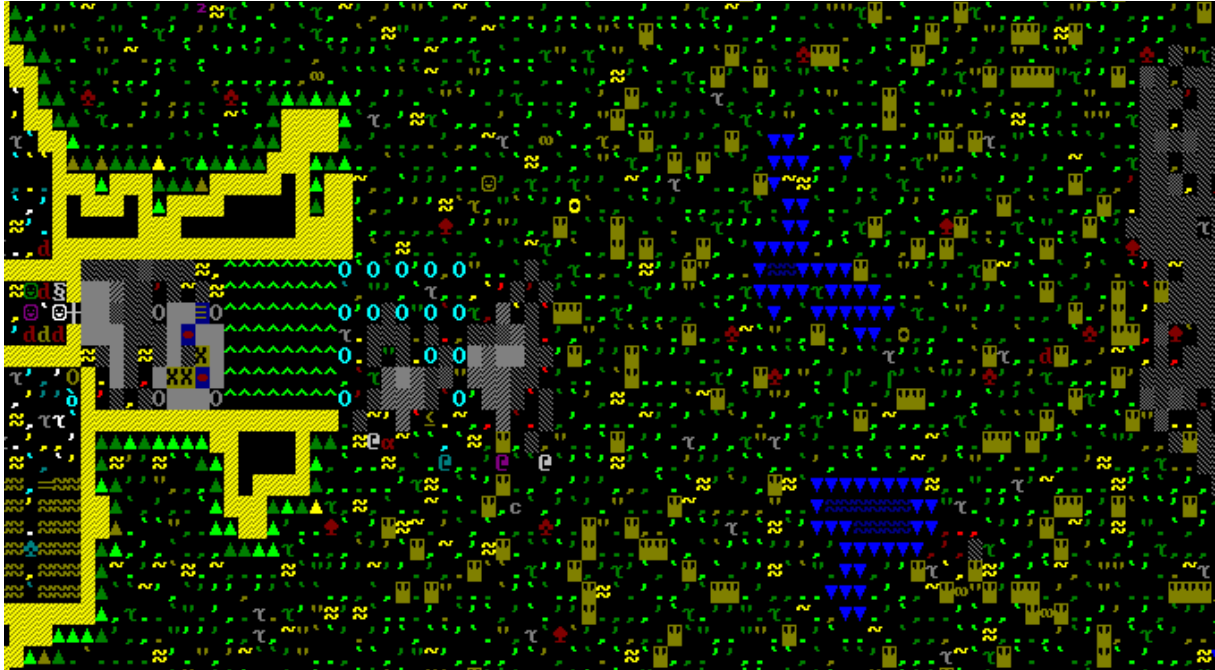
15th of Timber, 252:

Some forumite traders have arrived. Hopefully we can get some things for making booze. People are constantly making runs to the river... And the carp look hungry... The wagons couldn't come in but I don't know why...

17th of Timber, 252:

A snatcher came to us again. This time it was a L33t Gamer... I thought the place caught fire so I panicked. I'm going to have our military go out and chase him away.

I've also got an idea for a cistern for our well. Hopefully we won't have any dead coming to take us all out if this works. I'm going to have a floodgate open and drain enough water into our fortress and then fill up a hole that will be our cistern. And if we end up losing a lot of water, we'll just have the river throw more water at us. Its 100% zombie proof! I smell something burning... I think Mastahcheese burnt some food...



Several people just burnt to death. EVERYONE KILL THIS THING!!!!!!!!!!!!

18th of Timber, 252:

Four died after that L33t Gamer attack. Two are still on fire. The lands around us are setting aflame. We'll have to wait for the fire to die down before we can trade. I also counted LtAlfred among those dead. The fires are starting to slow down and I can see some burnt corpses of our bears and a few others who were burnt to death. All the wooden cage traps burnt and the entire countryside is still on fire.

26th of Timber, 252:

More people are being found missing. I think the flames in the fields consumed more than what we thought. We are down to 46 people now. All of our cage traps are unloaded, and our bridge is still under construction. If anything has gone right at all, it's our ballista battery that is ready. Now the catapults are needed to be made...

27th of Timber, 252:

BFEL has went into a meeting with the outpost liaison. I went in with them being overseer and did most of the talking. BFEL may be the site founder but I'm still overseer. I asked for iron, charcoal, plump helmets, limestone, courage wolves, and coke. They handed BFEL something to look over and then I left them be for a bit.

BFEL came up to me a few hours later and handed me a paper with what they wanted on it:

Trade Agreement w		
Good	Price	Priority
leather waterskins	171%	--!0!
prepared meals	119%	!0!--
rings	158%	--!0!-
crutches	122%	!0!--
cheese	178%	--!0!
cloth	116%	!0!--
large gems	132%	!0!--
powder	166%	--!0!
drinks	168%	--!0!
anvils	192%	---!0

Enter: View stockpile. 8293: Scroll. ESC: Done.

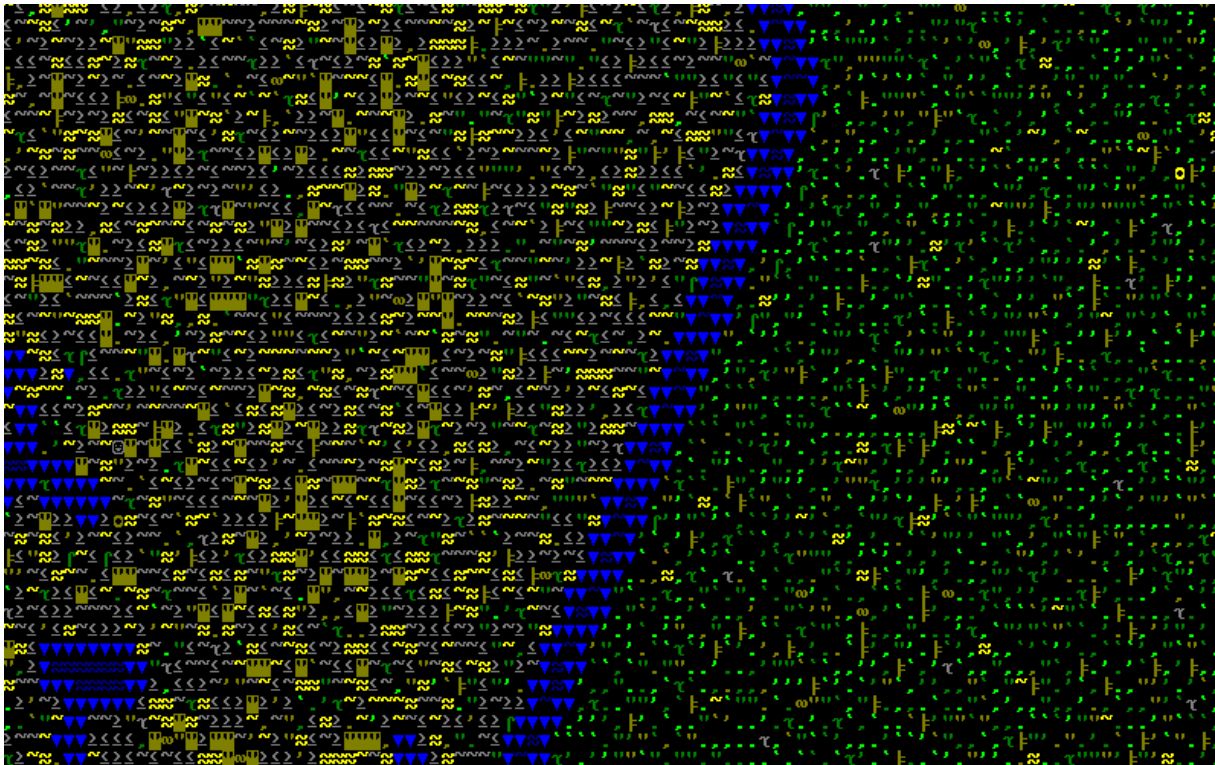
Anvils eh? We can do that! SMITHY! GET WORKING ON THOSE ANVILS! I want more metalsmith shops! They also want leather waterskins and powder... Whatever kind of strange potions they are making, I don't care, as long as we have a leg up on them for more trade goods.

11th of Moonstone, 252:

I just had reports that splint killed another forumite. He killed a cook by punching him in the face and jamming his skull into his brain. We have no real justice system so our banhammerer will deal with this hopefully... NAV also got us a good haul from the traders. We got rid of a lot of stolen elf crap for some food (mostly wombat for some reason...) and seeds. And of course, SWORDS!!!! We also got some courage wolves to replace those bears. Hopefully these can live longer than those bears. We also got a lolcat. It appears to be quite a strange creature... The statues are also finished for the sealing chamber, so we will begin the ceremony of sealing once the statues are in place... and so is that foul creature... Once he is taken care of, we will never have to worry about him for eternity if this works.

22nd of Moonstone, 252:

I have noticed that when I looked outside, the river stopped the flames from spreading across to the other side, so it looks like the border between Earth and Hell now.



We are also beginning the ceremony to seal that creature for good. I'm no good with magic, but we will make sure that he stays in there...

The following events were not written down but witnessed by others nearby

Highmax: Alright, let's get this done so we don't have to worry about this thing no longer.

BFEL: Pokon isn't here yet. Only he knows how to work this damned ritual. I'm here because you asked us all to.

Apiks: If something goes wrong, SOMEONE has to clean up the mess... So that explains NAV... But why the rest of us?

NAV: Well bollocks...

Highmax: We all were the ones who survived Necrothreat's fall. It would be good that with this we all know how to do this so we don't have to worry about one guy doing it. Plus, if we do this, we won't have an undead necromancer chasing us, but instead, have a thread necromancer sealed for good inside our walls.

Sprin: WHY DON'T WE JUST KILL HIM!? *Sprin pulls out a chainsaw*

Highmax: that will make more dead bodies... If we wanted to kill him, we'd have to burn his corpse.

Mastahcheese: Hey, you want to go set the woods on fire again, be my guest. But I'd rather still have a forest to actually have. Like just look outside! It's like Boatmurdered without the magma and elephants!

Misko: Its only on this side of the river...

Mastahcheese: Quiet Misko!

Misko: ok...

Highmax: Enough talk! I hear him coming!

Pokon enters the room with a book in one hand and a bag of random crap in the other

Pokon: Let us begin...

Pokon proceeds to go to the thread necromancer and draw runes on the wooden cage. He does the same thing to the statues, each with its one unique rune

Apiks: Highmax... Any idea this will work?

Highmax: it will work, trust me.

Pokon begins to raise his hands and speak random gibberish. A circle starts to form and encase the wooden cage. The statues glow and each light from the statue coats the cage. After the fourth one coats it, the glowing cage changes to a blueish tint and then fades

Pokon: Let us exit the room so I can complete this.

everyone steps out into the stairwell hall and Pokon chants more gibberish. Liquid silver rushes from a lower floor and creates a barrier, sealing the room the thread necromancer was in

Highmax: It's done...

Apiks: That's one worry less. Now let's get back with our duties. We have that well to make, right?

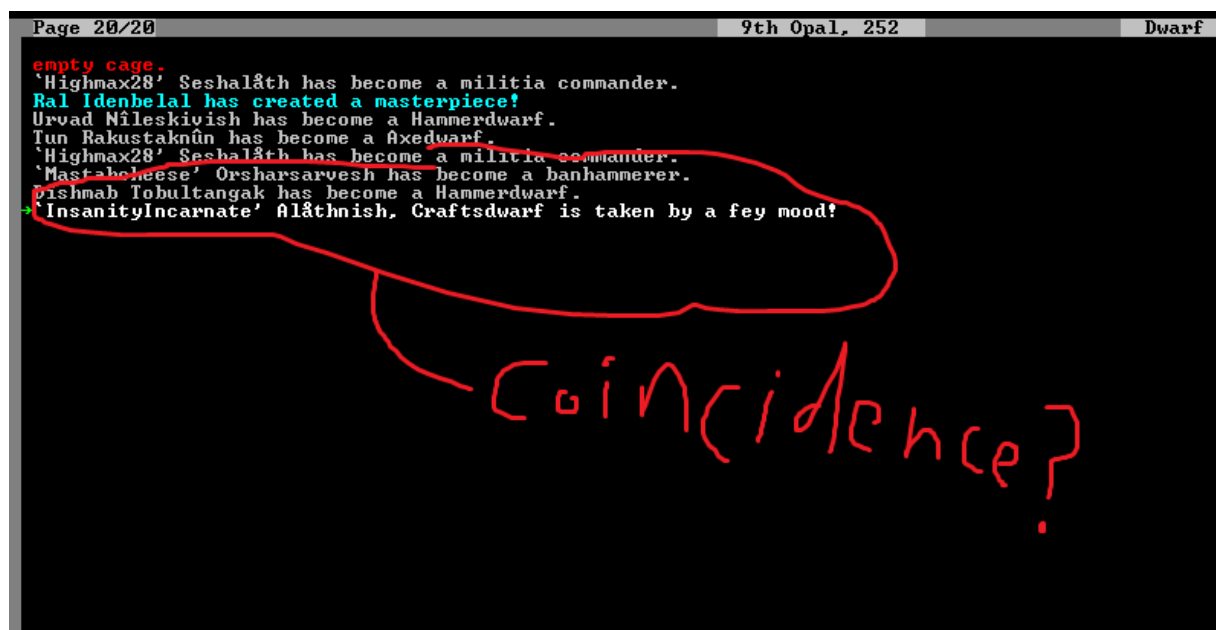
end of events

6th of Opal, 252:

I finally have our military up and working now. It only consists of me and a few others, but we can now get to training. It's not much but I think we can get somewhere. Also I keep getting annoyed by everyone asking me for cages to fill our traps... Well maybe IF YOU MADE SOME DAMN TRAPS YOU CAN PUT THEM IN!!!!!! God... I swear this is totally maddening... If this keeps up I'm going to lose my mind... I

9th of Opal, 252:

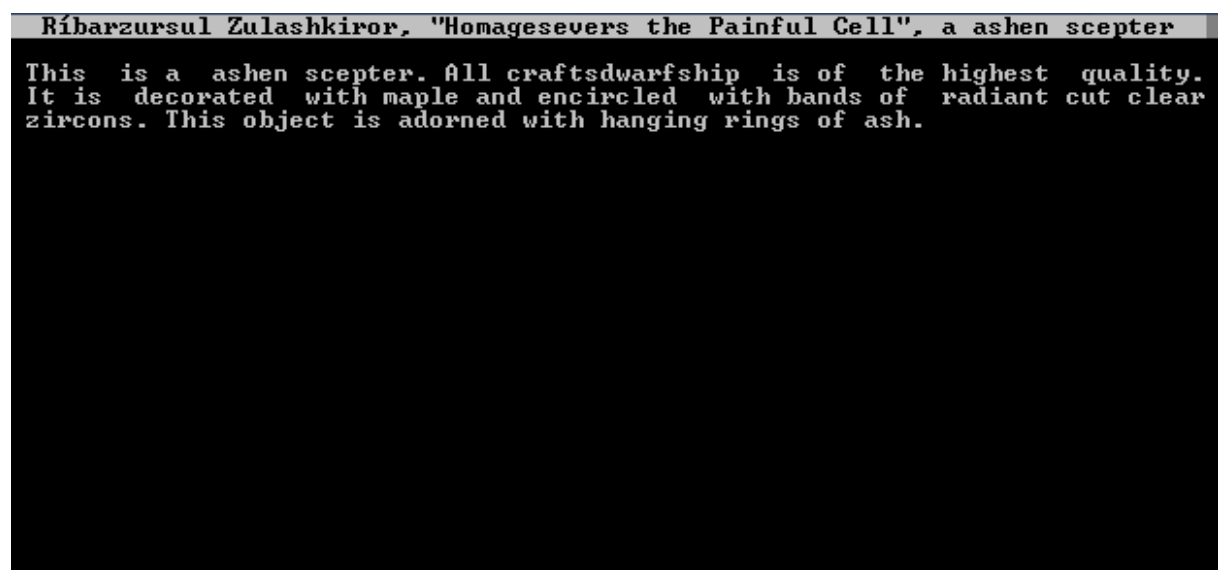
Why does this not surprise me?



The well is almost completed; we just need a floodgate. I've also decided I will be retiring from overseer duty soon. I don't know who I'll pass it to, but I'll make some fliers and place them around the place and see who will come and take the job. Insanity has also begun his construction. I also locked splint into his room since he is still tantruming... I swear, everyone is driving me crazy! The dining hall is almost done being smoothed down, although it has a lack of chairs and tables with it having only four tables and chairs. I will be putting those I made a lot earlier

17th of Opal, 252:

Our hammerforumite gave birth to a baby boy during training. I really hope this doesn't hinder her training... Our floodgate is also up so we will now release the water! Also Insanity completed his little project:



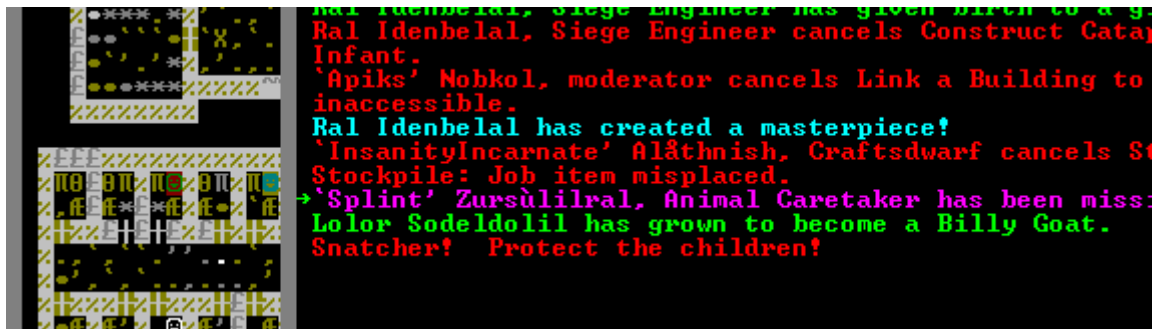
Not a bad trinket. Also I caught some morons FISHING outside. I yelled at all of them, destroyed their rods, nets and harpoons. None of them will fish again on my watch! Also a mason gave birth to a baby boy.

23rd of Opal, 252:

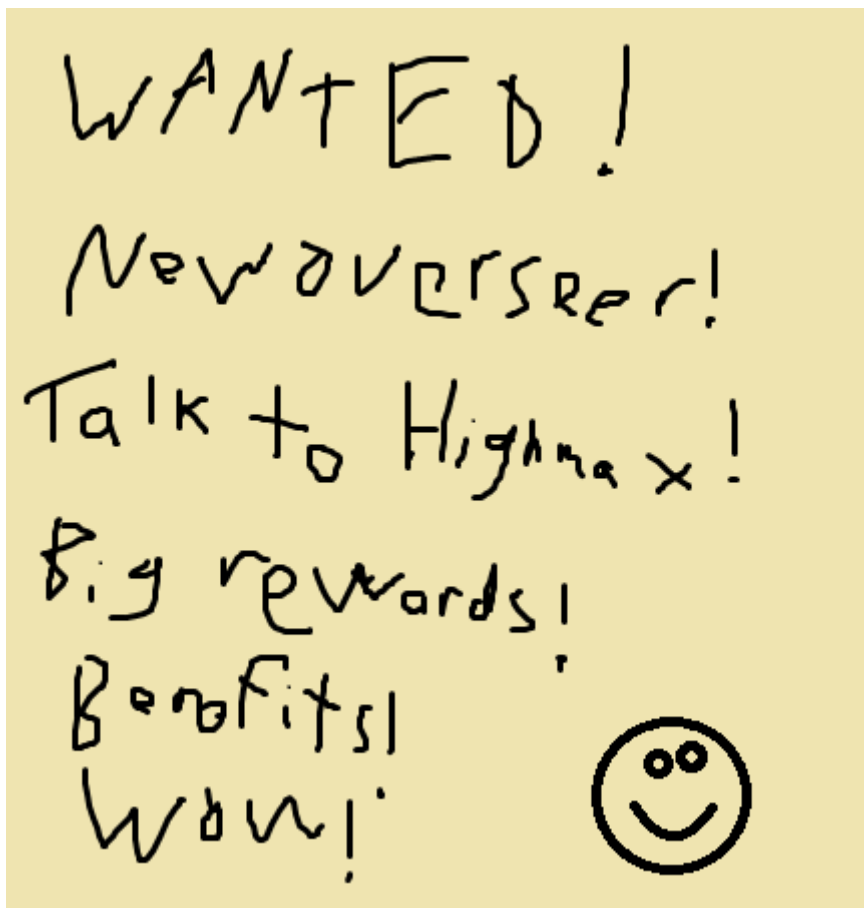
I found out why we have people running towards the river all the time: WE HAVE NO BOOZE!!!! I swear, if someone told me I kept being handed WATER and not BOOZE I would've done something about this! But NAV keeps handing me glasses cause I keep asking him to but not once did he say it was water! I swear I am NOT HAPPY AT ALL! And if I'm not happy, NO ONE IS HAPPY! And another person has given birth today also. Baby boom at Necrothreat much?

11th of Obsidian, 252:

I feel like I'm forgetting something...

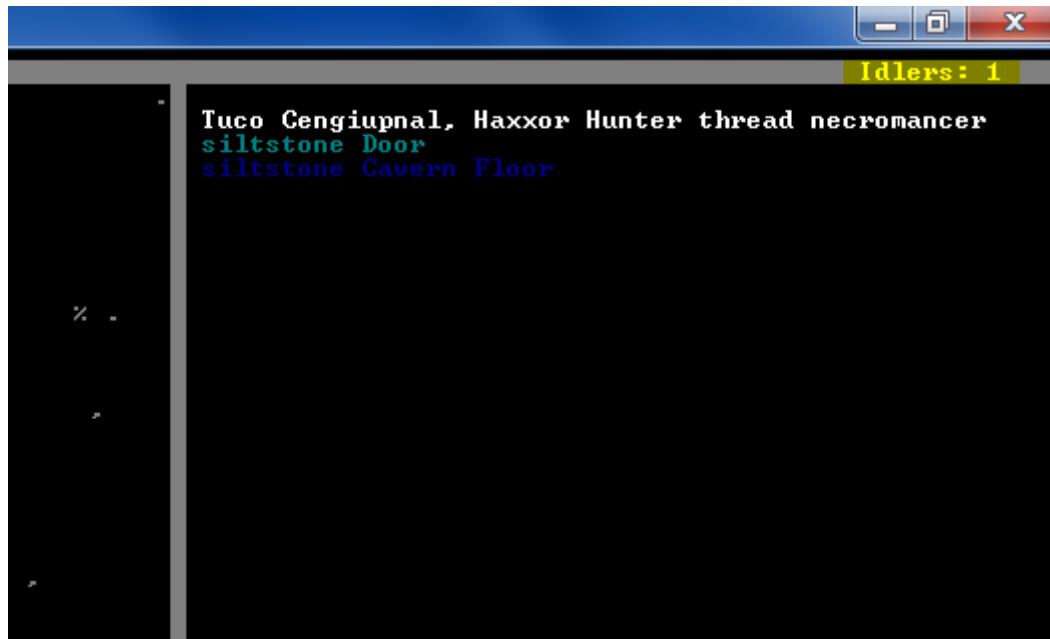


Oh shit... I'M SORRY SPLINT! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE DONE YOUR TANTRUM! Also two trolls were captured today. And our well is seeming to have a few drawbacks... What do you mean you can't access it!? It's right in front of you!!!! Oh, and I also made our fliers for that ad for the overseer:



Hopefully someone will get it and I can be rid of this position. No wonder Apiks gave me this job!

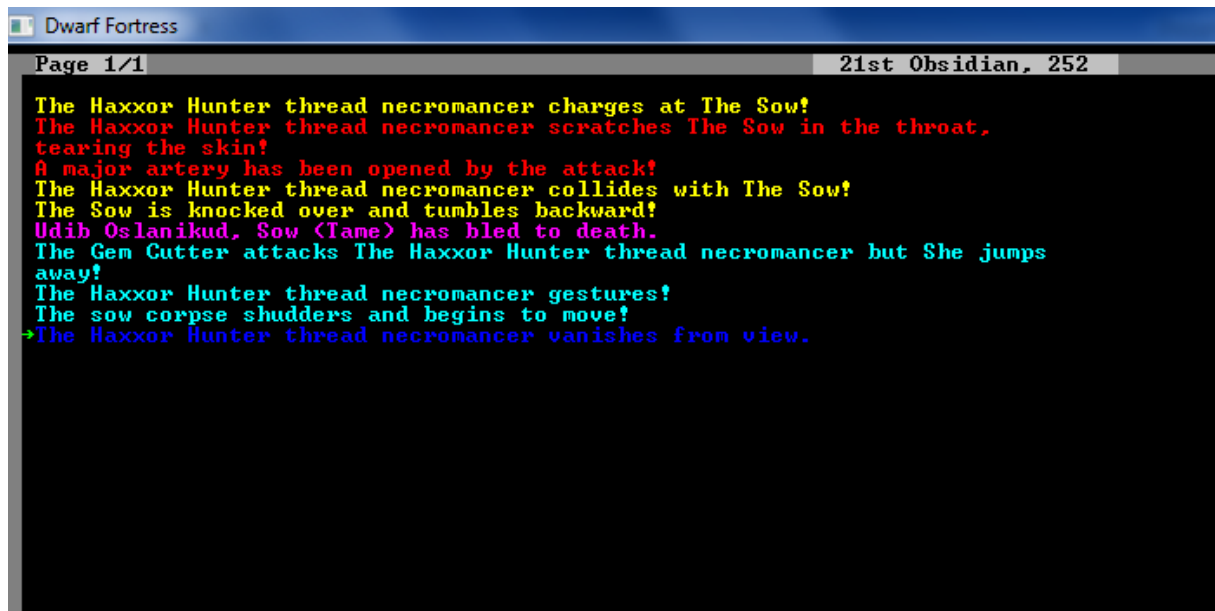
19th of Obsidian, 252:



words are jumpy and sharp

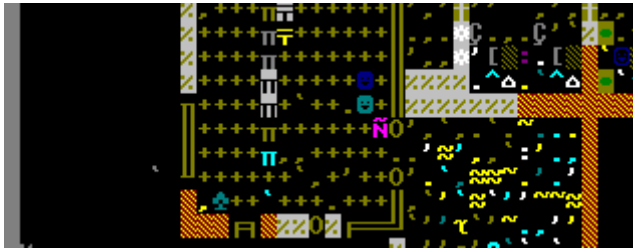
WHY ARMOK! WHY!!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

EVERYONE! GRAB YOUR WEAPONS! I WANT THIS BASTARD'S HEAD ON MY PLATE!



He's still there... I can hear him... I can smell him... I'll kill him... I'll feast on his corpse... No one can stop me... No one... I'll lock us all inside... Hehehehehe.... No one... No one can get out... Not even that freak... Heheheheheheh.... I'll wait until he shows his face.... He can't hide forever... I'll kill him... Yes... Yes... He's in here still... I sealed the corpses away so he can't revive them... Yes... He may have revived that pig... But the pig is dead... And the pig will stay dead... Yes... No

Necrothreader will kill me... No one can make it out... No one can make it in...
Hehehehehehe.... FOUND YOU!!!!!!



DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!
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DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!

He made it out... Busted down the door... I'LL FIND YOU AND KILL YOU! *goes into hallway and sees the kicked down door by the refuse pile, sees a figure emerge*
THERE YOU ARE! Wait... You're not the haxxor...

Page 3/3 27th Obsidian, 2

The 'Splint' Zursùlilral's corpse charges at The Swords Enthusiast!
The Swords Enthusiast looks surprised by the ferocity of The 'Splint' Zursùlilral's corpse's onslaught!
The 'Splint' Zursùlilral's corpse punches The Swords Enthusiast in the right upper leg with his left hand, bruising the muscle through the x(llama wool cloak)x!
The 'Splint' Zursùlilral's corpse collides with The Swords Enthusiast!
The Swords Enthusiast is knocked over and tumbles backward!
The 'Splint' Zursùlilral's corpse grabs The Swords Enthusiast by the first finger, left hand with his left lower arm!
The Swords Enthusiast stands up.

SPLINT!!!! YOU DIED!!! Uh oh... I'M SORRY FOR FORGETTING ABOUT YOU
SPLINT!!!! I'M SORRY I LEFT YOU ALONE IN YOUR ROOM! PLEASE STOP
BREAKING MY ARMS AND LEGS!!!!!! AAAHHHHH!!!!!!

blood splatters across the book

2nd of Granite, 253:

You thought I was dead, didn't you? I'm not... Many bones are broken, and there's
dead zombies running amok in the fortress but there's hope... *writing gets jumpy* I'll
find him. I'll kill him... I'll kill them all... I'll kill everyone.... Heheheheheheh....

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!

pages are all scribbled on from the rest of the book

Intervention

Apiks, The Rising Madwoman's intervention

Apiks' Journals

Extremely bad handwriting and splatters of blood on the page

15th of Slate

I did it... heh... I actually fucking did it. I managed to save Necrothreat II..... Damn it!
Bloody DAMN IT! *sobs* *tear falls on the page on top of the blood* We lost
everyone.... only 7 of us remain... Me (Apiks), Misko, Pokon and 4 others... Only us
remain. I used my escape plan of digging into my room and going to the
neighbouring mountain and staying there until the fuss went down. It did it indeed go
down. The Haxxor Threadromancer has left us with the obvious thought that we were
eradicated. With him gone, most of his creations started fighting between each other
and some of them fell into the cage traps. At the moment only 1 of the foul creatures
remain. The... the living corpse of InsanityIncarnate. Oh the horror. THE HORROR.
InsanityIncarnate killed his own baby which was in front of the fortress during the
mad dash outside. The fortress is in shackles. Bodies are lying everywhere. Dozens
of living undead are caged. DOZENS. I used to know every one of them... BFEL,
Highmax. Oh Highmax. Why did you have to die? Sprin. Mastahcheese. Even NAV.
LtAlfred's ghost is haunting us now, reminding us of what happened. To top it off, a
forgotten beast has awoken. I can hear him breathe when I am in the fortress... It
breathes. Heavily. I have no idea how we can manage. James was right. Armok was
right. Something big is coming, and this was just the tip of it. Oh the horror. I think I
am going mad. At least Misko is here. My only old friend left. Oh the horror. We were
18 when I initialized my escape plan. All was fine until I opened the passage.... The
fools started running to the fortress to get a drink of booze. Those drunken bastards.

Nothing is left of them now except their bodies. The Haxxor Necrothreader hadn't left. I immediately barred our temporary sanctuary. After it had left, we left and saw the carnage. Oh the carnage. THE HORROR. Damn it. Why did everyone had to die? WHY WORLD? WHY? IS THIS YOUR VERSION OF A GOOD JOKE? WELL I AIN'T LAUGHING. YA HEAR ME? *sobs* damn it... *starts crying* damn it all to hell.

16th of Slate

I organized the survivors to put down InsanityIncarnate. Pokon's pet took the brunt of the force and managed to do most of the damage but these undead have an uncanny power. It ripped the animal in two and spilled its guts. A gruesome sight, then everyone came and we managed to put him down with our combined forces. InsanityIncarnate is no more. We have to rebuild. As much as I would wish to mourn everyone, we must ensure the survival of the fort if more of these attacks are to come... DAMN IT! Everybody has wounds. Sprin is dead. All of our doctors are dead. No idea on how our booze and food supplies are going, I don't even know if we can clean the situation. Also I bet that nobody will even come near our entrance with those undead being by the dozens at the entrance in cages.

23rd of Slate

I cannot handle it. The pressure. It is just too great. The bodies. The horrors. Oh do they linger in my mind. I cannot make rational choices, hell I can't even go to the toilet without looking at a corpse. I'm handing down command to a fellow named "Mitre" from what he told me. He seemed to be in the best psychical condition, although I think he is faking it. Oh my friends, why did you have to die? DAMN IT! Haxxor Thread Necromancers, I shall have my revenge on you and your kind. I will not stop until I see every one of you eradicated and the world free from your tyranny. And if anyone dares so much glorify your names, I shall string them up. DAMN IT!

Chapter III

The Rule of InsanityIncarnate, The Insane

OK, seven living dwarves. What. Corpses everywhere, massive microcline bridge, almost everyone dead... This is madness. Why did I even agree to replace Mitre?

The reports keep talking about tantruming and dead forumites." How am I supposed to govern this place!? THERE IS MUCH BLOOD. Also, migrants. Maybe I can get this place running again."

I have no idea what any of these levers do! They're all set to Pull/R so I can figure out what they do.

OK, one floods the well area and the meeting hall, and the other makes the massive microcline bridge... retract? Who designed this place?

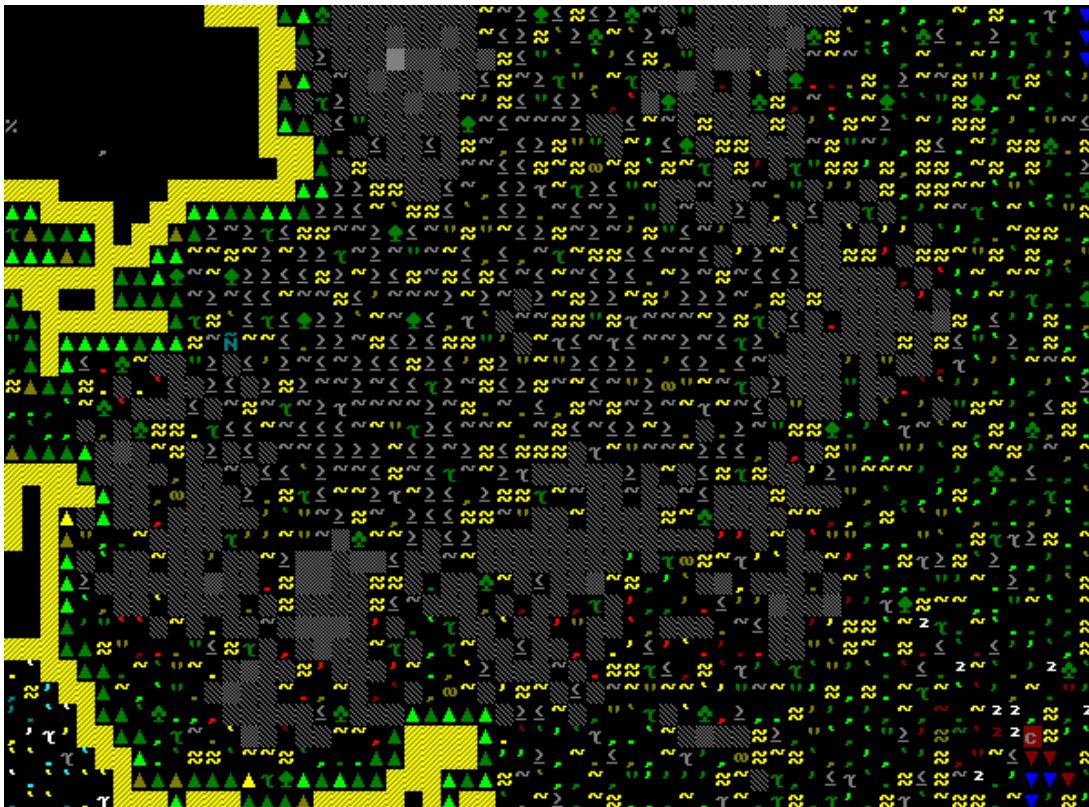
Thirty-two total dwarves now, and NOT ONE is going to fix the retracting bridge. There's also a buttload of cage traps in front of the depot. How do traders get in? How!?

Elves have arrived. Brilliant, I can seize their stuff. Assuming they can get past the thread zombies who decided to ambush the fort.

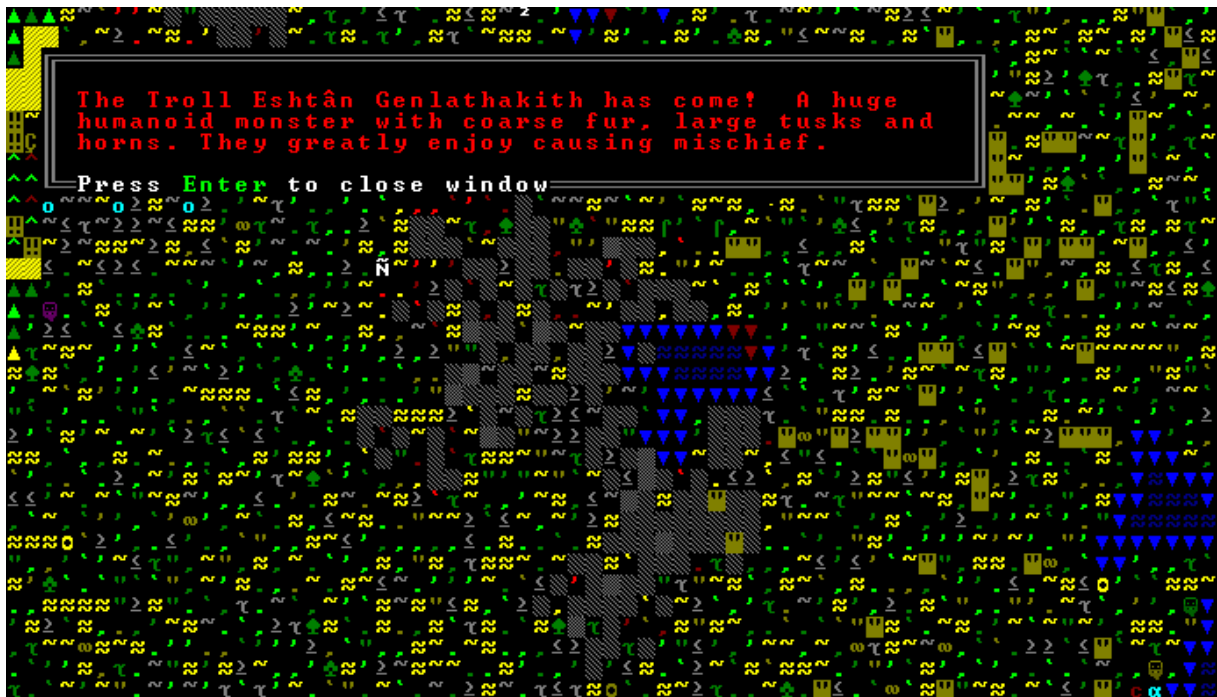
A bunch of thread zombies versus this guy:

```
Stukos Ottanendok, Recruit  
"Stukos Mindfulattic"  
♂  
  
Attend Meeting  
Dabbling Armor User  
Dabbling Fighter  
Dabbling Wrestler  
Dabbling Striker  
Dabbling Dodger  
Novice Carpenter  
Dabbling Mason  
Dabbling Grower  
Adequate Metalsmith (Rusty)  
Novice Mechanic (Rusty)
```

He proceeds to beat the crap out of them, and then- OH WHAT.



OK, as long as everyone gets inside, we should be fine. We'll wait for the fire to burn out, and everything will be OK, right guys?



Guys?

Stukos swung his axe down with terrifying force, and his clothes were splattered with blood and brains from the thread zombie. Was that the seventh one, or the eighth? Stukos didn't remember... all he knew was that Armok was with him. He had been chosen to defend Necrothreat against the evil that had invaded.

Stukos parried a slash from a sword, but missed his next attack. The zombie responded by slamming its shield into Stukos' leg. He cried out in pain, and fell to the ground, nursing his fractured bone. The zombie raised its sword, and brought the blade down in a deadly arc.

Spam flew from across the river, striking the zombie in the back. He collapsed, smothering Stukos as he tried to rise. A hammer came next, shattering the skull of the zombie. Stukos barely saw its bearer, but the forumite still helped him to his feet. Staggering on a broken leg, Stukos brought his axe down once again, slaying another thread zombie.

From beyond fortress gates, a plume of smoke had blotted out the sun and sky. More thread zombies were lurching up the river, armed to the teeth and hungry for blood. A cry of "TROLL!" rang through the air, and the Avatar of Armok turned to face this new foe. Thread zombies were weak. One had maimed him, but it was a pitiful strike at best. Stukos left the zombies for his companions, and strode into the choking smoke, to find the troll.

It was a massive, hairy beast. It held an herbalist in its massive hand, and dashed his skull against the ground. It turned to face this next forumite, a small, weak one,

carrying an axe. But he had no iron suit. The troll grinned. Stukos hefted his axe above his shoulder. This troll would die. Armok had commanded it. A hairy fist slammed into the ground in front of him, and he lost his footing. Another punch shattered his ribs, another his shoulder. But Stukos would not give in. He stood, and faced his foe. A slash from his axe traced a line of red across the troll's leg. The second slash missed, and the troll pushed the third aside. The troll flexed his arms. He wanted this forumite dead. The blaze was coming closer to the gates of the fortress. Stukos was coughing up blood, and the troll was pounding the earth in rage. A cloud of smoke drifted across them. Fire seared the ground, burning up what remained of the grass and shrubs. Flames caught on the Avatar's shirt, his hair, his socks... and he roared in defiance. Stukos charged at the troll, his last foe, and swung his axe with mighty force. The troll caught his arm, and almost lazily, tossed the Avatar of Armok into the flames that scoured the hillside. He staggered, buffeted by the heat. His fur was beginning to smoulder. The troll backed away from the fire, towards the gate of the fortress. He then tripped, on a loose block of stone, from the old bridge, and crashed backwards into the gates of Necrothreat, into the mouth of hell. His eyes flickered for a brief second, he heard a faint click. The last he saw was a cage, dropping from the ceiling...

A surgeon made a black bear bone right gauntlet.

This is a black bear bone right gauntlet. All craftdwarfship is of the highest quality. This object menaces with spikes of birch and iron. On the item is an image of Momuz Helmjoys the human and Loz Sullycalled the Nail of Clubs the minotaur in black bear bone. Loz Sullycalled the Nail of Clubs is striking down Momuz Helmjoys. The artwork relates to the killing of the human Momuz Helmjoys by the minotaur Loz Sullycalled the Nail of Clubs in the Certain Hill in 117. On the item is an image of Unil Prairiebasements the forumite in pig leather.

Operation: Drain the Dining Hall has begun! The water is currently draining into the wood stockpile and the bedrooms.

I've recruited a random ranger to be my new miner. Dig for victory!

And the troll... that the Avatar of Armok was fighting... has turned into a wereporcupine. Luckily, it's caged, but when the surface is "safe" I will set up a new trade depot area that will become the Porcupine Deathpit.

I've opened up the passage to the surface, and everyone ran out to collect the fish that were caught while the door was locked.

There a trees growing in the wood stockpile. I've designated a new one to be dug out, so the old one will become home to some farm plots once water dries up.

Pokon, our archiver, is trapped in a cage. I might build a new office for him, but he's staying in the cage.

Also, migrants. *Greeeaaat*. Everything was going fine until four months before they turned up.

My new depot is incomplete due to a disturbing lack of microcline blocks.

The traders moved into the old depot. I prepared to take all their crap, when a goblin ambush arrived.

My recruits hastened to defend their great fortress...

... by which I mean ONE recruit took my commands seriously, while the rest attended some last-minute combat training.

The training soon concluded, and five **brave** AWFUL forumites charged from the newly-constructed Gates of Necrothreat, into the hail of silver goblin arrows.

They were all crippled and unconscious within a few seconds, and dead a few seconds later.

More forumites ran out to collect the socks of the fallen, only to be slaughtered in the unrelenting waves of silver arrows.

Seriously, there are so many arrows flying around, it looks like they have some kind of semi-automatic crossbows.

Kobolds began appearing, to steal things. The human guards chased them off, though.

And then, a random hunter named Kel Wheelvision fired some lulz at the goblins.

Stricken with laughter, they fled from the hilarity. The forumites cheered, for they had won. Scavenged socks for everyone! A doctor took advantage of the celebrations to claim a workshop for some reason.

Anyway, our entire military is dead. To a ~~man dwarf~~ **mandwarf** forumite. Even the named axedwarf, who didn't even get a single shot in before he became a feathered pincushion.

Some other random forumites are dead, and a mason took an arrow to the knee.

Altogether, a very productive first two seasons. Autumn is here now, and I have a horrible feeling that things will only get worse.

Endok Dègled has claimed a craftsdwarf's workshop. I bet it's going to be an artefact crown.

Dwarves are tantruming, the new stockpiles are **slowly** being dug out, and I

desperately want to know why the troll who attacked earlier is labelled as Caged (Friendly).

About 10 of the dwarves died when the goblins ambushed. Damn archers.

Anyway, human traders are here, and are about to leave. I can't remember if I've already traded with them, so I just seized all their stuff.

I ran out of microcline blocks for the new !!trade depot!!, so I'm finishing it with random blocks that the traders had.

The possessed doctor has begun a mysterious construction! With gems and lignite!

HE MADE A LIGNITE BRACELET!!

Churchwinnowed the Silkiness of Waxing... uhm...

Anyway, it's encrusted with gems and menaces with spikes of lignite.

Work has begun on the upper level of my !!trade depot!!. Soon, I'll add the troll cage, and the retracting floor.

At this rate, though, it'll never be completed. Too many tantrums!

Chapter IV

The Rule of BFEL, The Bored One's

I have taken control of this fortress and for once, I have many grievances. WHAT HAVE THE PREVIOUS RULERS BEEN DOING?

Let me list my many grievances:

1. WE HAVE NO MINERS
2. There are two trade depots, for completely unknowable reasons.
3. Neither of them is wagon accessible.
4. Instead of a safe, secure "airlock" design for the depot, we have clusterfuckmcwhywouldyoudothisome?
5. There is an area of the fort that is entirely unconnected to the rest of the fort except through the surface. I have no idea why it exists.
6. You drained the river into a large room for no discernible reason.
7. This room is secured from the rest of the fort not by a secure drawbridge, but by DOORS.

8. Said doors WERE NOT FORBIDDEN, ANYONECOULDHAVEOPENEDTHEMANDFLOODEDTHEENTIREFORTWHATISWRONGWITHYOU?🤔?
9. The flood room? RIGHT NEXT TO THE BEDROOMS.
10. Oh it's for the well. YOU ARE NOT FORGIVEN.
11. Two bedrooms are ABSURDLY huge, and all others are so miniscule I will curse your names forever.
12. One of the giant bedrooms? Owned by a GHOST. A FUCKING GHOST MILKER HAS THE BEST ROOM IN THE FORT.
13. The only engraved room in the fort is dedicated to housing 4 silver statues and a caged human. I assume he is a necromancer, and this is some pagan, Armok damned ritualistic worship. This cannot be tolerated.

All in all, WHAT THE FUCK

Ok while un-fuckening the entrance to the fort, I noticed that directly above the entrance is a bridge. The bridge is floating in mid-air. There is nothing supporting it, and it is wide open. WHAT IN THE **FUCK** DID YOU PEOPLE DO TO PHYSICS? MIGRANTS.

Migrants drafted to masonry duty. Also why is the entire world designated to plant gathering? And why so many hunter/fishermen? WE LIVE IN ZOMBIELAND, WHY YOU MAKE PEOPLE GO OUTSIDE? IT DANGROUS DERE.

Troll Wereporcupine identified as a previously caged threat. Still keeping my new burrow "GEDAFUKINSIDE" which is behind the trap line. Note to future fort fuckers: Use military alert to get people inside during crisis scenario. Should cut down on our famous casualties.

Part of the entrance ceiling collapsed. No serious injuries, but the surgeon took a hit to the knee. Should I make into a guard?

Minor cave-ins continue during construction of entrance ceiling.

Merchants have arrived.

Should probably suspend our ~~destruction~~ construction until the merchants are gone.

We are being trolled. Well y'know moreso then usual. Due to the troll ambush.

Might've just unleashed a thread zombie in the trade depot. Was trying to see if could sell it. Probably gonna just go hide again.

Obtained booze and courage wolves from traders. Sold goods of fort. No idea if this was a good deal or not, as no survivors can appraise.

We have a vampire. It killed Meepo.



Well now it's a shoddilyconnectedtotherestofthefort creation.... with a roof made up of whatever we had handy/felt less like falling down and rendering someone unconscious.

Ok, so let me be frank.
 Necrothreat, contrary to popular opinion, is boring.
 Horribly, horribly boring.

Chapter V

The Rule of Sprin, The mad doctor

Ok I got a siege and an ambush by Threadromancers who are led by a severed head!! The destroyer of the original Necrothreat has built an army to defeat us, but no, we stand against our fear and will hold this land of our- wait we don't have a military? O crap EVERYONE RUN!!!

Let the flame cleanse the Threadromancers! I can hear them screaming from in the wall, burning to a crisp. If only I had a way to capture the sound to help me sleep at night...

Wait... The Threadromancers are still ALIVE!? How I saw them engulfed in FLAMES!! I must capture one for study! Ok... Now they are nothing more than piles of bones and teeth on the trade depot? This makes sense!

I caught a Threadromancer, everything is still on fire, and there is a HUGE pile of severed limbs on our door step...

The Threadromancer's fate has been decided!
Life imprisonment!
He will be in a tiny 3 by 3 room for the rest of his internal life.

Another necro that has resurrected tons of necro tidbits on our front porch punching some poor bastard to death!

Hey wait apparently a bunch of dudes are being harassed by severed hands!

I think they are in the fortress.

Also... *Cough*

100% not my fault...

I still can't find a lever to seal ourselves up, and three Threadromancers are outside standing around wall the country side is on fire!
Why does this always happen to me!?

Space flies, man... Space flies...

The hands! The hands! They're destroying us! They're –

Blood on the page

Suddenly a tremor and a voice accompanying it is heard

You heard it here first, folks. Necrothreat I dead at the hands (eyes?) of an undead head. Necrothreat II has fallen once more during the reign of Sprin to Undead Hands. DAN DAN DAAAAN.

flicker, flicker, flicker

There we go. Time has been pushed back and we have given the next overseer a chance to try out his fortune. Will the fire happen again? Will strangling hands defeat Necrothreat II again? Keep reading and find out!

Chapter VI

The Rule of NAV, The Harbinger

I tried to train a squad of 7 soldiers (lead by Apiks V3), all but one of them died against a gamer ambush 😞 All the gamers died or ran away, and the set the yard on fire again. I guess we technically won that battle.

The chief medical dwarf is actually being useful. She ran out onto the charred battlefield, found the lone survivor of the battle, and brought him inside. Now she is actually healing him even though we don't have a hospital. She calls herself Jenny, the old doctor Sprin's nurse.

The hospital is done.

Timeless bob's mom was killed by the site founder (who is a vampire). Timeless bob died of thirst, and the vampire was locked up behind bars. The vampire mandated the construction of 3 coins.

A clothier went into a strange mood, but we didn't have any silk so she went insane.

A migrant wave made it inside the fort safely. 8 forumites were recruited from them to form a new military. This includes a macelord, and a crossbowman who killed a roc before coming to the fort. They are all equipped with a full set of iron armour and a weapon of their choice.

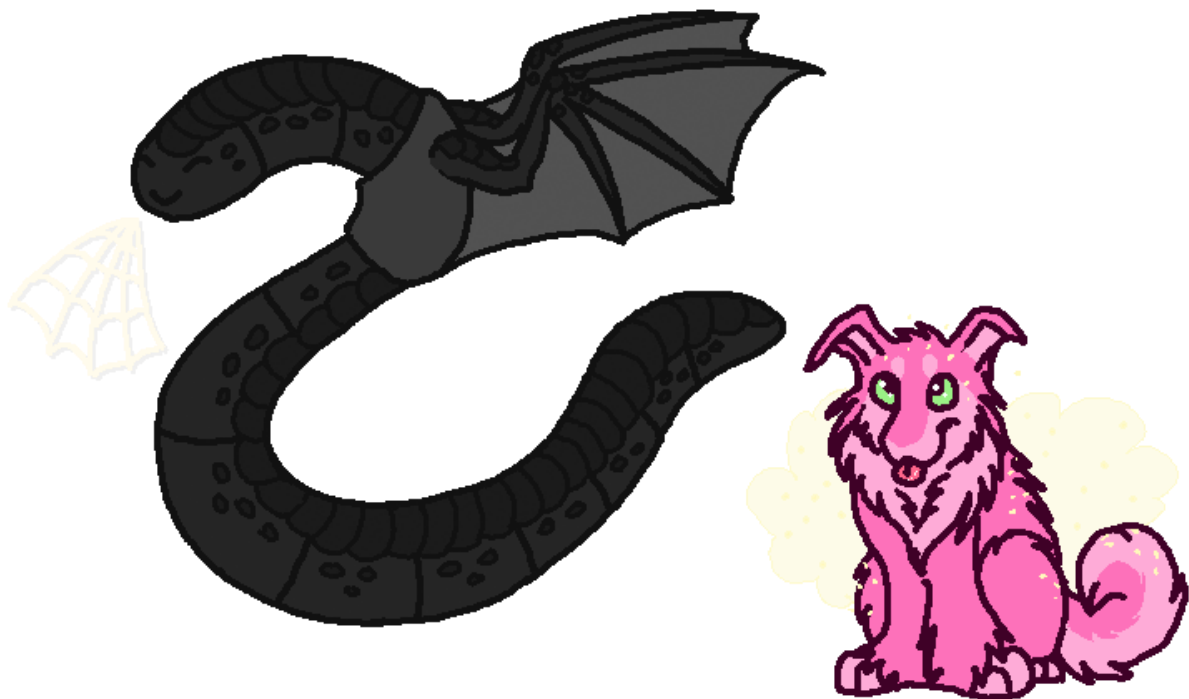
A two squads of Threadnecromancers attacked. They wielded axes and spears, and were led by a maceman. They set the northern edge of the grass on fire, but it didn't spread because the rest of the grass was already burnt. They were burnt by their own fire, melting all their fat off.

I ordered the army to attack, and they actually won the battle! a few necros were caught in cages, and the rest had their heads chopped off or smashed into pulp. A few civilians died, but all the soldiers survived. The army has been divided into two person sparring teams, and they are training very quickly.

A team of miners found the 3rd cavern layer. A tribe of olm men has been completely wiped out as a training exercise.

A migrant wave, a human caravan and a squad of troll swordsmen and a haxxor master thief all came at the same time. The trolls and thief were completely annihilated without any deaths.

There are some rumours of a huge scaled earthworm with wings, Beware its webs. And a noseless fluffy pink dog, Beware its deadly dust.







Fan art by Calico

I got a shiny new artefact zinc laptop.

Then things went to hell.

A Giant attacked, then 3 squads of thread necromancers and zombies attacked, then I found another vampire, then a minotaur attacked, then 3 squads of trolls attacked.

Over half the fort is dead, only 30 dwarves left.

A vampire is having a mood and needs silk, and there is still a minotaur and a lot of trolls outside the fort. I'm giving control of the fortress to the next unlucky guy.

Chapter VII

The Rule of Th4DwArfY1, The Unknowing Darkfriend

1st of Granite:

So. This is all that has been left to me. Dirt and grime clog the corridors and the wind whistles emptily through the rooms. The only other sounds to be heard are the roars of the Minotaur outside...and I would rather not hear that. Well, NAV said that he wanted to concentrate on "Beer Smithing," whatever that is. This would be all fine and well, except for the fact that this has left us without a leader. The rather annoying solution to this was for NAV to bestow the rather dubious honour upon whoever he first passed in the hall. Why did I have to leave the mines for that drink...

Well. I did, and now I am in charge of this hell hole. But to work now; the first thing on my depressingly long list is to stop the endless battering of our chief medical dwarf by the resident unfriendly Minotaur. So, drafting some dwarves, I prepare them for a noble charge. I'll admit that I know little of military matters, being a lowly miner, but a charge is ALWAYS noble. Right? Even in Necrothreat, it HAS to be. The bards can't all be wrong, now can they?

The noble charge ensues and... Well, we meet some Trolls. Blood sprays, they get through the traps and two die. The door is blocked open by knives and clothes. NAV valiantly attacked the Trolls and drove two of them into cage traps. His spine was broken and bruised, but he lives.

**He is one hundred six years old, born on the 1st of G
His lower body is bruised. His lower spine is broken.**

This is a sobering moment for me as I look up from my mad dash in doors. His sacrifice steeled my determination and, realising that with the door wedged open we

would have no hope, I ordered an entire fortress attack. As 20 dwarves came pouring into the trap area, I turn and face the trolls. I. Will. Stand.

Like a vengeful horde we crash upon the trolls, wiping them from their miserable existences.

```
Cog Okoshkadol, Troll Crossb  
"Cog Vigorhatchets"  
  
upper body      Unconscious  
lower body  
head  
right upper arm  
left upper arm  Extreme Pain  
right lower arm  
left lower arm  
right hand  
left hand  
right upper leg  
left upper leg  
right knee  
left knee  
right lower leg  
left lower leg  
  
g:Gen i:Inv p:Prf w:Wnd z:St  
ESC: Done f: Follow
```

Buoyed by our success, I order the advance upon the Minotaur who was still futilely bashing at the medical dwarves' head. Pathetic beast! Does it not know that a dwarves' skull is thicker than his brain?

No matter. As we, the few dwarves remaining of 34 not children or unconscious, charge I notice what the chief medical doctor was being beaten upon. Underneath his bruised and bloated body lay...lay Jenny, dead. No more will the dwarves be so eager to rush to hospital for stitches administered by her fair hand. No more. Rage in my heart, I flung myself at the enemy, pick reaching for Minotaur blood. But alas, it was not my blade which tasted blood that day, but the mace of our broker:

```
bruising the bone!  
The broker bashes The Minotaur in the left foot with her <iron mace>,  
fracturing the bone!  
The Minotaur falls over.  
The broker bashes The Minotaur in the right upper leg with her <iron  
mace>, chipping the bone!  
The broker punches The Minotaur in the right knee with her right hand,  
bruising the muscle!  
The broker bashes The Minotaur in the left hand with her <iron mace>,  
fracturing the bone!  
The Minotaur loses hold of the <llama wool left glove>.  
The Minotaur gives in to pain.  
The broker bashes The Minotaur in the head with her <iron mace>, bruising  
the muscle and tearing the upper spine's nervous tissue!  
The broker bashes The Minotaur in the head with her <iron mace>, bruising  
the muscle, jamming the skull through the brain and tearing the brain!
```

No casualties in fighting the Minotaur. It was not bright and through its efforts to kill the chief medical dwarf had grown exhausted.
The chief medical dwarf was brought to the hospital where it was watched over by the vacant and murder-driven

Weight: 247F **Basic Value: 10***

Contents:

Abalmozib ūthirthun, 'Highmax28' Seshalāth's corpse
yellow sand coating

Through the bars of the cage.

Highmax28, the zombified stalker of Necrothreat II! He looks the part. Drooling as he looks through the bars at the hospital of sleeping forumites....

9th of Slate:

Blessed be Armok! Fodder for the Trolls. Er... migrants!

Some migrants have arrived, despite the danger.

22 of them. This amount of content forumites is not gonna happen again!

Anyway, back to business.

With the arrival of the new forumites we have now bolstered our numbers to 53.

Herding the new arrivals inside I call down into the halls below. "Close the bridge"

With that, the newly made bridge rose into the air and sealed us off from outside. We need time to lick our many wounds. I only hope that fate will be kind and that the wounds can be healed at all.

As the bridge sealed us in but hopefully didn't seal our fate, the vampire which had been demanding silk decided to just toss in the towel and go bonkers instead. Great. But in the end he went down laughing.

24th of Slate

I have just been informed that the sources I had been looking at to verify the death of the vampire were slightly wrong. He did not in fact go down laughing. In fact, by all accounts he was pretty unhappy, cursing his killers. My mistake was where I read that he was struck down with lulz. On closer inspection...

```
→The flying <<steel lulz>> strikes The Vampire site founder in the left  
lower leg from the side, tearing the muscle through the <pig tail fiber  
trousers>!  
The <<steel lulz>> has lodged firmly in the wound!  
The Butcher stands up.  
The Butcher stands up.
```

He was butchered by the butcher. Fitting.

The men complain of hearing an oozing sound within the deeps. I disregard these reports as all know well that there is nothing in the deeps that could be heard through the solid rock. I've gotta reduce their ale rations...I have included an example of one such report. They even made up fake names for it!

```
The Forgotten Beast Sor Kulkoru has come! A huge  
quadruped composed of vomit. It has three long,  
curly tails and it has a bloated body. Beware  
its webs!  
Press Enter to close window
```

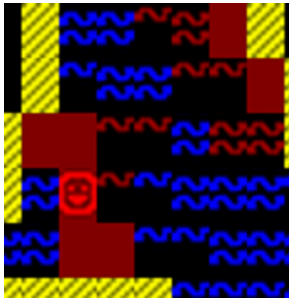
Ha! Fanciful tales. Anyway. As I was supervising the drafting of some more farmers to tend the fields I noticed an absurd amount of bodies in the refuse stockpile. Wrinkling my nose, I ordered an extension to the graveyard and more coffins built. I have also ordered memorials for those fallen whose bodies still rot outside.

25th Felsite:

Today the horrible screams of trolls were again heard within the halls. A siege engineer, forgotten in the stampede to get through the soon-to-close gate and left outside, stumbled upon them whilst drinking from the river.



His sacrifice for warning us will be remembered: mugs of ale were raised in his honour that night.



The mood is upon me...running to a desk I call out for PEN! INK! PAPER! Armok has sent down his divine ruling...must...write...

The Sealing of Necrothreat

In Necrothreat beneath the moon
The Trolls do roar and zombies rule.
But Forumites will pour forth soon
From their mountains so deep and cool

The river twists and turns in blood
And trees struggle to beat the rot
Which chokes the fair forested wood
Where small animals curse their lot.

A grave wound can heal with some time,
A crop will grow when winter ends;
But can the Necrothreaders' crime
Be fixed before our land it rends.

In Necrothreat beneath the moon
The Trolls do roar and zombies rule.
But Forumites will pour forth soon
From their mountains so deep and cool

6th Hematite:

→Zuglar Shetbêthlorbam has claimed a Metalsmith's Forge.

The Forumites' local Armourer has been struck with an idea! I watch with interest as he rushes to the nearest metal smiths forge...
And he made *Drum Roll*

Zuglar Shethbêthlorbam, Armorer has created
Tashemgasol, a silver left gauntlet!

Press Enter to close window

A single gauntlet! *Drum beat stops suddenly and I frown down at the paper I'm holding*

Wait, only one? DAMN IT!

Tashemgasol, "Pullbreaths", a silver left gauntlet

This is a silver left gauntlet. All crafts dwarfship is of the highest quality. It is encrusted with pear cut green jades and encircled with bands of silver. This object menaces with spikes of green jade and sapphire. On the item is an image of broad crosses in sapphire. On the item is an image of two squares in green jade.

23rd Hematite:

The trolls...They are still there... WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE?!?!?! They taunt us, loitering in front of our fort...but we will beat them!! Yes, they will see...Time to build up the military might of Necrothreat again! We will finally sweep from these halls in a vengeful, noble charge...yes...But first, the military must be built up...yes....



NO...They..Can't have them....I don't care if the other forumites are looking at me strangely...THEY WON'T GET THE NEW MIGRANTS! We...need them for the m...m..milita..ry!

Some migrants have arrived, despite the danger.

MIGRANTS! ATTACK T.. THE T.. T..T.T..TROLLS! OPEN THE GATES!
FORUMITES, ATTACK.

Froth dripped from my mouth, but I did not care. My thoughts did not penetrate far through the mad red haze which had dropped in front of my eyes. KILL. TROLLS. NOW. The scourge of Necrothreat will now know why to fear our blades! Yelling, I ran into their 6 strong ranks, surrounded by my faithful companio.....Wait, WHERE IS THE MILITARY!

The Troll Axeman charges at The Stonesmiter!
The Troll Axeman hacks The Stonesmiter in the right foot with his <{bronze battle axe}>, tearing apart the muscle through the <llama wool sock>!
A sensory nerve has been severed!
The <{bronze battle axe}> has lodged firmly in the wound!
The Troll Axeman collides with The Stonesmiter!
The Stonesmiter is knocked over and tumbles backward!
The Stonesmiter is no longer stunned.
The Troll Maceman punches The Stonesmiter in the right lower arm with his left hand, bruising the bone through the <giant cave spider silk dress>!
The Stonesmiter misses The Troll Maceman!
The Troll Maceman counterstrikes!
The Troll Maceman scratches The Stonesmiter in the right upper arm, bruising the muscle through the <giant cave spider silk dress>!
The Troll Maceman punches The Stonesmiter in the upper body with his left hand, bruising the muscle and bruising the heart through the <giant cave spider silk dress>!
The Troll Maceman bashes The Stonesmiter in the head with his <{copper mace}>, bruising the muscle, jamming the skull through the brain and tearing the brain!
The Stonesmiter has been knocked unconscious!
The <{copper mace}> has lodged firmly in the wound!
'Th4DwArfY1' Edtûldastot, Stonesmiter has been found dead.

Blackness...blackness all around me. From the depths of this inky sea rises a face wreathed in flame. I know it, for it is engraved in the minds of all young Forumites. Armok. I try to kneel in awe, and find I have no body, no flesh with which to prostrate myself.

"Go forth" Roared the voice softly, quiet and loud at the same time. "I will give you a new body, one you will control. You will protect Necrothreat, shield it. Go forth." A burning hand reached for me, enfolded me, seared me. Screaming silently, I was borne away on a wave of fire.

Pain...I feel pain. But...I DO feel. Light pierces my eyes, and I open them. Indistinct shapes swarm around me. I blink, and they coalesce into people looking down at me with concern on their faces. I live!

6th Galena:

Armok has played a cruel joke upon me. I have been given a body, but at a cost. I dread to think what has happened to its original owner...No, I must not think of that. I am alive, that is what matters. My new body is disfigured....my right hand is gone and.... the dead, Oh Armok, the dead! I can hear them, the zombies, the ghosts! They whisper in my ear and pollute my dreams...what sort of cruel gift is this? But I live. I must focus on that.

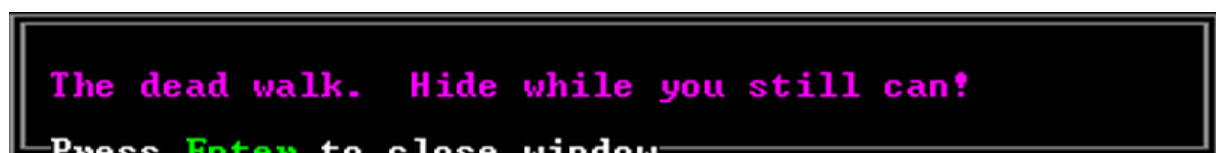
I have been given the body of a female. Bah. Along with the whispers of the dead infiltrating my dreams, I am haunted by the sibilant voice of Armok himself. He says that Necrothreat is built upon his lair on earth. He called it Shayol Ghul. Like a puppet, I dance upon his strings, but I cannot help but hear when he speaks. I am to build up the might of Necrothreat, for a reckoning will come. This reckoning will be led by Padan Fain, Lord of Necrothreaders. I am beginning to think that Armok is not all he seems to be, that we Forumites have been duped. But I cannot warn them. I am a puppet, and I no longer pull my own strings.

7th Galena:

I woke up in the middle of the night. My dreams were fragmented, filled with images of cold fires, black castles and searing light. Sweat soaked me through, and the bed clothes twisted themselves around me like snakes. Through my dreams threaded the orders of Armok himself, though I did not see his face. "Shield I said, and shield you shall be. Build up the military, create two squads. One squad is to be named Maidens, and this you will join." At this, the voice seemed to express an incomprehensible range of emotions, and mixed in with them all a sense of dark amusement at my change of gender. "The other will be called Stone Dogs, and is for the men. See it done, and you will be rewarded.

13th Galena:

I was inspecting the ballistae when, through the fortifications, I saw:



Fain's forces are here! Surely this is the reckoning of which Armok spoke?

Those strings.... they pull me again. Better to remain dead! Curse Armok, Curse him! I...go somewhere I do not wish to speak of, not even on paper. There I...dealt with Necrothreat's ancient enemy, the Trolls. I can scarcely believe, even after I had learned the truth of our master, our god, that they have all along been his staunchest

minions. Trollocs, they call themselves, not Trolls!

The pit in which they dwelt was a lowly cave, the smoke from their fires pooling murkily on the ceiling. I sat at one such fire, surrounded by the foul beasts. Their beady eyes seemed to be measuring me up for their black steel cook-pots. Shivering, I explained to them the wishes of Armok.

Afterwards I was jerked back to Necrothreat and was wandering the halls, trying to lose myself, forget what I had done, what I had to do, in the name of our god. God, or demon? It does not matter, I suppose. It was at this time that a messenger ran up to me.

"Here you go, sir...err...ma'am. A message from the military head" I look into his eyes and, seeming scared by what he sees in mine, he presses the message into my hand and runs off. Frowning, I look at the missive.

**The dead walk. Hide while you still can!
An ambush! Curse them!**

They have come, as Armok ordered! Normally, I would not wish help from them, even in the direst of circumstances, but the legions of dead are nigh on endless. I can at least rest in the certainty that they will all die, but still take some with them. They held back.... they said they would send more! It would seem that Armok does not have as big a grip on them as he thinks....

My musings were interrupted by the hurried footsteps of the messenger returning.

"My Lor...Lady. The Captain sends another report! He handed it to me and backed off looking at me warily, as if I were dangerous! What must they see when they look at me? Has Armok's touch left a mark? I cannot dwell on these things. I must protect the Forumites, and also, though it galls me to say it, serve the whims of Armok. I looked down at my clenched fist and noticed the forlorn message hanging limply from it. Relaxing, I flattened it out...

**An ambush! Curse them!
The haxxor mutilated corpse
The haxxor mutilated corpse
The haxxor mutilated corpse
An ambush! Curse them!**

Two more squads have arrived! Jogging towards the fortifications to see for myself, it happened. Between one step and the next I was wreathed in pain. My body felt like flame personified, blazing with a thousand aches. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them I was greeted by a much different scene than that of the sombre halls of Necrothreat. I groaned, a deep gurgle in my throat. Who was I? I did not know. I saw the bones sticking through what was left of my flesh. I did not care. I wanted one thing, and it stood near me, arms raised in greeting. I grinned, a twitching of my maggot-like lips. The thing looked confused, worried even. Then I pounced.

The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton grabs The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer by the <<elk bird leather hood>> with her left hand!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer retches.
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton grabs The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer by the fifth toe, left foot with her left upper arm!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer retches.
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton charges at The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer looks surprised by the ferocity of The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton's onslaught!
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton kicks The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer in the left hand with her left foot, shattering the bone through the <<pig tail fiber left mitten>>!
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton collides with The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer is knocked over and tumbles backward!
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton strikes The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer in the right knee with her <<elk bird leather hood>>, chipping the bone through the <<pig tail fiber cloak>>!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer is no longer stunned.
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton strikes The Forumite

Mechanic thread necromancer in the left foot with her <<elk bird leather hood>>, fracturing the bone through the <<sheep wool shoe>>!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer retches.
The Ingish Dorendesis's partial skeleton grabs The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer by the left lower arm with his right lower leg!
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton strikes The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer in the upper body with her <<elk bird leather hood>>, bruising the muscle and bruising the liver through the <<pig tail fiber cloak>>!
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer vomits.
The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer gives in to pain.
The 'Th4DwArfY1' Zefonvathez's partial skeleton strikes The Forumite Mechanic thread necromancer in the head with her <<elk bird leather hood>>, bruising the muscle, jamming the skull through the brain and tearing the brain!

My head twisted around on its spine in time to see the axe of a troll cleave it in two. The hood slipped from my lifeless fingers.

Gasping, I sat up in the fortress. My joints ached like I had been lying on the ground for days. I groaned, remembering what I had done, what I had been. Looking around, I realised that I was in the hospital. Highmax28 was watching me through the bars of his cage, empty eye sockets staring sightlessly at me. In my mind I felt a feather light touch, and then Highmax's voice drifted in. "Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelp meeee. Leeeeeeeeeeeeeet meeeeeeeeeeeeeee ouuuuuuuuuut!" Standing, I felt compelled to open the cage, let loose the fury of the dead, drown us in blood...NO! Jerking my hand away from the cage, I ran from the room, Highmax's whispers drifting after me. Curse Armok and his "gifts!"

No sooner had I reached the hall than Armok jerked me away again, seared me from existence and then built me again in a castle of dark stone. The cement holding the bricks together seemed to be made of congealed blood.... Tearing my gaze from the horrible monument to suffering, I looked at the room. Tables and chairs as ordinary as any found in Necrothreat stood in straight lines in the centre of the room. The things that sat in the chairs were far from ordinary. MMO and RTS Gamers. As one, they all looked at me at the same time. "We've been expecting you" They smiled

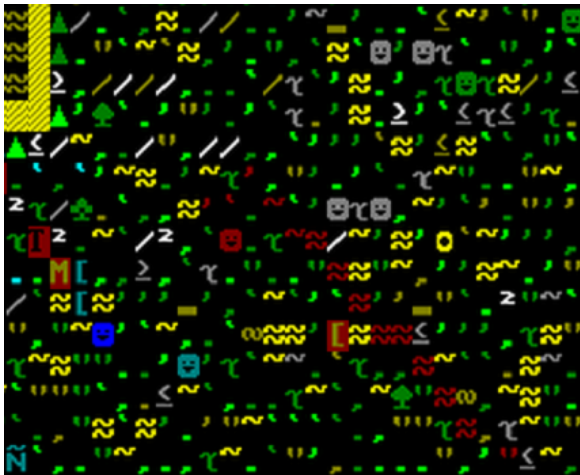
identical twisted grins. I relayed Armok's orders, then was jerked back to Necrothreat.

18th Galena:

Days have passed, and they came! I had begun to hope that they never would, but seeing them dispatch the zombies, it gives me hope. Necrothreat may yet be free of both the forces of Fain and Armok!

**A MMO gamer! Drive it away!
An ambush! Curse them!**

The Gamers were defeated, as were the trolls. But Fain's forces have been weakened! Gathering the Maidens and Stone dogs, we pour from the gates, a 20 strong force.



Tearing through our foes, we return to the fortress, only to be met with a scene of destruction. While we had been away some of our forces had been left behind to guard the gates. They had been pounced upon and...well, the report speaks louder than words.

'Maximus !FUN!' Sazirekast, Stone Dog has been struck down.

But, in the end, it was worth it. We lost Bain and Chiad to Haxxors, as well as one or two others. Four dead in total. The siege isn't broken yet, there are three Haxxors left. But we cannot attack them. We dare not attack. They would decimate our forces, novices as they are. I begin to see that not all charges are noble.

Interspace

In the Mind of Highmax

"Where am I?

Free me...

How did I get here?

Set me free...

I can't remember anything except death and blood... All I can see is darkness, and nothing but...

Death...

Who's there?

laughter

Show yourself!

Behind you..."

I turned to look and found a hooded figure standing before me. All I could see was his grin, as wide as his face. I couldn't see his eyes, but his fiendish grin was unsettling enough.

"You've come to..."

Who are you? Why am I here?

You're somewhere better than Heaven, and yet, worse than Hell...

What do you mean?

This is your worst nightmare ..."

Suddenly, the void began to reveal itself in the shape of a familiar structure in the distance. I could not tell what from so far away. All I could tell was it was dark, cold, and I was outside. The figure disappeared in more laughter. I can only hear his voices in my head.

"You're going to die..."

Your soul will nourish the master...

Your body will serve him..."

I rubbed my arms and noticed I was stripped of everything. No sword, no armour, and no clothes. I was alone in a field, in the dark, naked. I knew I had to find shelter, the sky, which I just saw now, wasn't showing it was night time, but just dark. The sky was as grey as you can think of, and no sun shone through, but it was somewhere between the afternoon and dusk. And night was coming fast. I made my way towards the structure, reluctantly.

There was a river that ran on the way there, black as night. I took a handful and drank. I immediately felt sick and began to vomit. It felt like I puked up my innards, and I saw that I coughed up blood. I looked in the water and saw dead and decaying forumites in the water. Some, looked all too familiar, until I saw the face of Apiks and NAV pass by. What's going on!?

I then felt a deep chill go down my spine as dark blue flames revealed a bridge across the river. It was solid, and appeared to show signs of ruin. In fact, as I stepped on it, I noticed half of the bridge walls were missing. The pale fires were on both sides, as if they were guiding me. Suddenly, snow began to fall, and I noticed dead trees and shrubs littered the landscape. I crossed the bridge and I heard the voices saying something else:

"I'm dead..."

But I not dead! I'm right here!

But I was killed..."

I dropped to my knees and screamed. The voices grew too loud and too overbearing to control myself. I began to convulse and twist like a madman, as if I was possessed. It felt as if my entire innards were burning and my mind was about to explode. Then, I saw large black birds circling overhead. Were they crows? Ravens? Vultures? I could not tell. I managed to regain control after a bit (and after I think I vomited and urinated myself), and got myself back up, feeling pain throughout my entire body. I heard sounds of what sounded like howling, but it was too distorted to know it wasn't anything ordinary. I hobbled closer to the structure, which looked more and more familiar as I got closer. The small tower; the gate with a bridge overtop a small pool... It was all too familiar. Every breath felt like something was ripping my lungs apart and then stabbing them with a thousand burning daggers. I was gasping for air now, covered in mud and vomit.

I was almost at the bridge when I swear I saw something move. It looked humanoid, but not normal. And then another passed me by, his skin as pale as snow, and almost decayed in appearance. A third came by when I saw that they were pale

faced versions of my former friends. BFEL was the one I looked up to first, with Apiks's husband following in behind. The voices grew stronger and stronger as I walked towards the gate more, almost like they were screaming in my ears. Oh gods... I must be in Hell... No, that man said it was worse than hell. Is this somewhere in between heaven and hell? I can't tell. I only see the pale faces pass me by as I scream in pain. Some of the figures even trample overtop of me, adding to the excruciating pain I felt already. I don't know if anything broke, but I was too banged up to care. The snow was going down harder now, and I felt even colder than before. I managed to get through the pain and crawl across the bridge.

I noticed now that the tower was partially collapsed, as were the walls surrounding the gate. When I reached the gate, I heard the voice say one last thing before I threw myself over with whatever strength I had left:

"Welcome home..."

I vomited again, but most of the pain in my head went away. I could breathe a little easier, but it was still difficult. I felt every bruise from the pale faced forumites now, and I think I broke a rib or two. I don't know how long it took me to get here, but it felt like weeks, months or years even. I managed to get the strength to get back up, and I figured out now where I was...

I was home... Back in the first Necrothreat...

I coughed up more blood as I walked towards the original structure of Necrothreat. I wasn't here when this section was built, but I remember it all too well. Then, I heard the voice again, but it wasn't in my head.

"You've made it... Wonderful..."

I turned around and saw nothing. But then I looked up and saw that damned head staring right at me, grinning.

"You cannot go back now..."

The gate then sealed shut and the bridge up along with it.

"Your soul will be mine to feast on..."

Choke on it! I'll find a way up there and destroy you!

You cannot defeat me here... Not even Armok can control me here..."

I shuddered at his response. I then noticed that it started laughing, and then teleported away.

"Find me..."

I walked inside, despite I felt very weak and tired. There was soil and sand everywhere, just as I remembered. The stockpiles were empty, but that wasn't what my issue was. I walked into what was the coffin room and saw that each of the coffins were dug up. Actually, the better term was they were dug OUT, as if something came up from the ground. Also, the writing on each headstone was different than before.

Here You Lie, Highmax

You died, You came back, and died again

You'll serve us in time Highmax

Death awaits you, Highmax

It was very terrifying. Then, I turned and saw I was trapped, for the ceiling collapsed and blocked my way out of the room. I could do nothing but dig my way out. But without the tools, it was nearly impossible. I started to take handfuls of the sand out at a time, and then I began to work faster. I kept this up until I was exhausted. And the best part: it looked like I barely did anything. I gave myself some time to sit down and think. As I sat down, time passed, and I can't tell if it was merely seconds or hours, but I felt my stomach rumble, and my lips felt really dry suddenly. It was as if I hadn't eaten or drank in days, which I could've sworn it wasn't that long. I got up and began to dig again, but making almost no progress once again. I needed something to dig through this sand pile. I looked at the dug up graves and looked into them. Armok damn me for exhuming, but I didn't care, I needed to escape. I saw only pieces of bones and rotted clothing.

I looked at the graves and then one changed before my very eyes:

Getting Hungry, Highmax?

I paid no heed to it, but then my stomach let out this gurgling sound. Then my mouth felt like it was a desert, no water or moisture in it whatsoever. I began to have trouble breathing again, but my throat felt like it was scratching itself from the inside, and I coughed up more blood, wetting my mouth slightly.

"What the hell is going on?"

Rightfully so..."

I coughed again, and then began to dig again and again, struggling with each heave. Then, I went up to the grave, kicked it down, and took a small piece and notched it into a long piece of bone. The grave said before I smashed it:

Hunger and Thirst Will Consume You

I used the crude shovel I made to dig at the sand mound more, and then it started to give way. Within seconds, the mound was gone, and I saw another grave, and a rusted sword was inside of it. I grabbed it, not before reading the inscription and coughing up more blood.

Here Lies Highmax, Sword's Enthusiast

I was soaked in blood and sand now, on top of whatever else I had on me. I walked back outside and saw the snow had turned to a black rain. Thunder sounded and lightning filled the sky (which was now an even darker shade of grey). How long was I in that room? I didn't know, but I didn't feel hungry or thirsty anymore (I hope I wasn't sustaining off my own blood).

I went down the stairs and descended past everything until I reached the bedrooms. Maybe I can get something to put on, and maybe find some equipment other than a rusty sword. I found my old room on the way and found nothing in it. I walked around a bit more and found a tomb that I did not recognize before. I walked in and saw the coffin change to a bloody spear, and the door turned into a wall. I was trapped now. The walls were all engraved, and they all showed horrifying images. Giants ripping apart forumites, Necrothreaders leading their armies to kill the living, and one image, of Necrothreaders worshipping a head with an evil stare in his eyes. What was odd about this one was there appeared to be hands floating with it. I don't recall our bane having hands at all. I then sat in the room for about five minutes before I began to see the pale faces again. They walked into the room and appeared to be working on something, but when I walked towards them, they disappeared. Then, the voices came back.

"Free me..."

I'm so lonely...

Release me..."

And then, images burned into my mind. And when I mean burned, I mean it felt like my brain was on fire. I saw Necrothreat burning on the night it fell. I saw toady one's corpse rise from the depths of his watery grave. I watched myself get swallowed by the werebeast. I watched as NAV died fighting. And I began to weep as I saw Apiks get slain by her own husband in undeath, only to rejoin him in death. I heard the clang of steel hitting stone, because I began to convulse again. I coughed up blood and vomit again, and one convulsion caused the sword to cut into my arm, spreading my blood all across the floor. I was screaming in pain, in sadness and in agony now.

I don't know exactly what happened next. All I knew was I got up, and next thing I know, I felt every part of my body burning, and I screamed to Armok to make it stop. I then felt blood flow from my stomach, and when the voices and the burning in my head went away, the pain in my chest of the spear through my heart came. Its tip changed to a double hook, both facing me. I can't get out now, and I'm dying. I can

feel it. Blood coated the room with vomit, and I was covered in blood and slashes everywhere. Then I screamed in pain again. But no matter how much blood I lost, I would not die. I felt the extreme pain, but I would not die or pass out from it. Why?

I only heard voices again, but it was laughing this time. Then, the head came from the image on the wall.

“You cannot escape...”

It disappeared again and I began to try and free myself. Blood flowed out as I tried to pull myself off, but the hooks stopped me. I tried to break the wooden shaft, but it wouldn't budge. All I could do was sit there. Then, the floor shifted, and I found myself floating. Actually, the correct term was hanging, for I was still on the spear, but hanging off of the ruined tower. The rain against my exposed wounds brought extreme pain, and then the hunger and thirst returned. Then, the voices came. I screamed for it to all end. I screamed for help. And then I screamed for Armok to help me. The last one must've been answered, because then I was back in the void, but hurt still. I then saw a blade floating before me. I had to reach it to grab it, but it was difficult because the hook spear was still in my heart. I pulled myself towards it until the hooks began to sink into my flesh. I grabbed the sword which glowed blue like adamantite, even though it looked like simple iron.

Then I saw the head again, but I wasn't hanging. And I felt a great surge of strength, and my wounds felt healed. And I was washed and clothed. The head had a look of pure hate on it, and it let out a cry that sounded like a thousand banshees screaming. I then walked towards it, shielding myself, blade in hand. The sounds were driving me mad, but the sword made me feel different; it was as if it was a holy relic I needed to have to break free from the madness and pain. I then stabbed the head, following through with a slash, splitting the head in half. Its face turned to one of shock. Then, it began to release a large amount of blood, which appeared to move. The head dropped to the floor and the blood began to take a real form: one of a forumite.

I readied the blade and saw that grinning figure again before me. He drew a sword, similar to mine but it glowed black. And then we clashed blades. Every single blow I swung was blocked with equal grace and speed. It was as if he was my equal in every way. As if he knew every tactic I had. Then, we locked swords and he spoke to me.

“Your god may have helped you, but you cannot defeat me in my own realm!”

He laughed insanely and pulled a second blade out. He was quick with them, but I was skilled with using a single blade, shield or no shield. I managed to lock blades again and I kicked him in the stomach and slashed at his face. He paused as blood splattered everywhere. He dropped one of his swords and put his hand to his face. Then, he laughed, blood pouring out of his hand. His hood was thrown back, revealing his true identity: He was a zombified version of me.

I slashed at him again, but he blocked it with ease. Now I know why he was my equal with one sword; he was me in every way possible. I knew to beat him, I had to change tactics. I started by charging towards him, and picking up the sword he dropped. I blocked his counterattack with one and slashed him with the other blade. The black aura sword passed through him though, but it blocked his blade. I then took the black blade after stepping back a bit and threw it at him, and then knocking him against the wall of our “arena” and impaling him into the wall with the blue sword through his chest. I twisted the blade as blood gushed from the wound, and the zombified me just laughed more and more. I then ripped the blade out and slashed his head off in a clean stroke. I then proceeded to crush the head with my foot as the body laid down to sleep in a pool of blood. Then, everything began to warp, as if reality itself was changing. The blood disappeared and the walls changed shape, but I still stayed in my clothes and the zombified version of me stayed dead. I dropped to my knees as my head wouldn’t stop spinning. Then, I dropped the sword, now a dull, basic blade, and put my head in my hands. My head wouldn’t stop spinning, but everything felt so much clearer; as if I just purged something deep within myself. Then, I felt a hand on my back as I heard a familiar voice speak to me:

“Highmax, is that you?”

I turned and my eyes met an old friend of mine: Apiks. I wept with tears of joy and couldn’t stop saying “It’s over...”. Apiks thought I was mad and sent me to the hospital ward for a checkup. I was back in Necrothreat II, but anywhere was better than home... I never want to go back there again...

End of Highmax’s Mind

Th4DwArfY1’s Rule

5th Limestone:

A marvel has happened! In another time, another fort even, I would be on my knees praising Armok for his mercy. I no longer think he is merciful, but this is miraculous nonetheless. Timeless Bob, bereft of both mother and father, had been moping in the halls, his baby face raised to the soot-stained ceilings of Necrothreat, bemoaning his fate. We had begun to expect his descent to madness, though many thought he had already hit it. What kind of Forumite would refuse booze? But today he rose from his stupor, proclaimed himself a baby no longer, and drank his first booze of many.

→ ‘Timeless bob’ Dallithiden has grown to become a Dwarven Child.



```
'Timeless bob' Dallithiden,  
"Timeless bob' Riddledpaddl  
8  
Drink
```



```
cracks his knuckles. He needs alcohol to get through the working day and can't even  
remember the last time he had some.
```

It is these small things which enable me to live under the shadow of Armok.

20th Limestone:

I was wandering in the deeps, many miles below the surface. I could almost feel the weight of the rock pressing upon my vulnerable back. Shivering, I walked onwards through the gloom. I felt compelled to do so, as I had felt compelled to lift a pick from the stockpiles many floors above. This is what it has come to. Before, Armok was content to watch me squirm, follow his orders and know that I had to obey. But since I talked to Highmax's corpse, a thing polluted by the different flavour of evil that is Fain, Armok has tightened his grip on me. He did not like how close I came to obeying the dead. It feels like I cannot breathe without his permission. So I walk, in the deeps with a pick. And I don't know why.

Coming to an unassuming stretch of floor, unremarkable except for the fact that Armok had picked it out, I (or is it Armok, now?) raised the pick and swung it, muscles straining, at the ground. Sparks flew in a fountain. Not used to the labour, I paused for a second. Then, steeling myself, I swung again. And again. Again. Again. I soon lost count of how many blows I landed, but in the end I was standing above a hole in the ground. One last strain of my muscles brought the pick down with a resounding crack. Red light bathed my face and, as the hole widened, I saw Armok's own hearth fire.



```
You have discovered a great magma sea.  
Press Enter to close window
```

As I stood, framed by immense heat and light, Armok again spoke to me, a sibilant whisper in my ear. "Forgessss. You are to make forgesss." I jerked around and walked, movements wooden and stiff, back to the stairway. Armok has spoken, and I must obey. No matter that the orders make me want to spit in his oh-so-holy face. Bah!

Timber 1st:

Months have passed since I ordered the mining out of the forge area. It is not yet

done. I begin to worry. Armok is cruel in success. What would he be like in failure? I do not wish to find out. I stalk the halls, ignoring the dead, the ghosts, the zombies.

All except one. More and more I find myself visiting the hospital, walking through that area of death and disease and going to Highmax. I am...drawn to him. He was once an overseer like me, and he too fell under a harsh master. I have Armok, he has Fain. Sometimes, I stand there for hours, talking to the dead. The Forumites walking past me, tending to the wounded, look at me strangely. They edge away and cringe if I look at them. But I do not care. More than anything else, more than the salvation of Necrothreat, more than the defeat of both Armok and Fain, I long for what Highmax has. Death. It was a curse Armok put upon me! I was allowed to visit the shining halls and vaulted rooms of paradise, then snatched away in fire and darkness, stuffed into a new body. Made a puppet!

I was visiting Highmax as I thought this, and instead of despair I felt a great well of anger. All my life I have been a free Forumite, independent, a miner out of the depths, chiselled by my family's history into a being of pride. And Armok stamped on it, tearing it under his feet. Ha! He probably has hooves. What do I matter to him? I am a being of wood, a puppet, to be jerked around at will. Of use as entertainment, but never cared for. Never loved. I took all my anger at the betrayal of Armok, the anger at the body I am in. And most of all my anger at my pride less, spineless self. I took it and I clumped it together, a seething ball of flame in the centre of my heart. It felt good there. It pulsed like the beat of a second heart, it warmed me. It was in this moment that Fain tried to take control.

While I was organising my anger, Highmax had been watching. Pasty white face straining to peer unseeingly through the bars of his cage, he saw my weakness. Highmax, not truly there for all zombies are forced under the will of Fain, struck me mentally. This mental whip flayed my mind, sent me reeling for shelter from the onslaught. Where before he had used a feather touch to talk, there was now a huge boulder, rolling down hill, gaining momentum. I knew then and there that I was going to die, and found that I did not want it after all. Heart pounding frantically at my rib cage, I took shelter from the storm in my mind. Taking my anger, I threw it through the bond Highmax had made, shot it straight and true into the darkness which shrouded his mind, twisted it into a form of madness. Blooming in the darkness that was attacking me, that anger hurled it back, threw it away. Stumbling, I ran from the room, leaving Highmax sitting placidly in his cage.

17th Timber:

It works! They said I was crazy, but it worked! I WILL be rid of Highmax. I feel a certain amount of regret, for I believe that we share a certain bond. We are both dead, yet I envy him. He has a chance to die, and I will let him achieve it. It is time to release him, no matter how much I wish it were otherwise.



I set the miners working on this killing ground weeks ago. It has a one tile large bridge to let soldiers in; an archer's area to train them and, most importantly, it will be where Highmax meets his end. May it be painless. I can sense a driving force behind me, an implacable will tightening on my mind. Armok. He wants this envoy of Fain dead. For once I...agree with him. Highmax has become a danger to the Forumites. He must die, it will be a mercy.

I stand, in blood soaked ground uneven and unsmoothed, but still with a harsh beauty of its own. I stand and watch as the cage holding the husk that was Highmax opens, and the thing itself shuffles out. I stand, and remember the forumite that he was, expert with the sword, defender of the halls. A true hero. I stand, and I look at him now. Holes filled with congealed gore pierce his flesh, bones jutting out at odd angles. I stand and feel the tear track through the grime on my cheek. I will do my duty. I must. I WILL stand.

Gesturing, I sent my most trusted soldier against the beast. Slashing and stabbing did nothing, Highmax just smiled vaguely and stood there, the blade sinking in and out of his flesh. Tired, the soldier stopped and turned to me, eyebrow raised in question. He wanted to know what strategy he should use. Quick as a flash, Highmax lost his lethargy and struck, foul arms raised and mouth open in a rictus snarl. The soldier, seeing something in my face, spun around just in time to ward off the blow. Whirling, Highmax swept his legs out in front of himself, broken bones allowing for a deformed position, and swept the soldier's feet out from under him. Cursing, the soldier went down, Highmax crawling over him. A dark aura rose from Highmax, madness in its most pure form, a hanging globe that sucked in light. I have heard that darkness is merely an absence of light, but this...this made it seem the other way around.

Seconds had passed. As my men and I watched in horror, in fascination, unable to move, we saw the fight continue, soldier rolling on the floor, Highmax bringing his super natural strength to bear. It was a struggle worthy to be sung of by bards.

Through my connection with Highmax, I felt something strange, something which stopped me from sending my men in. At the back of his mind, while the madness which had suffused every fibre of his being was flying with charged energy around the battlefield causing a mini-cyclone which whipped clothes and tugged beards, a small kernel was growing...a kernel of ...normality. It was Highmax, free from Fain's touch, growing in the rotting brain. Eyes widening with this realisation, I waded through the battlefield, trying to separate the two figures rolling in the filth, indistinguishable from one another in the murk. Roaring, I reached forward and pulled Highmax free. But it was too late, the spark that was Highmax was ripped from him and span in the storm, a thread of light surrounded by the blanket of darkness.

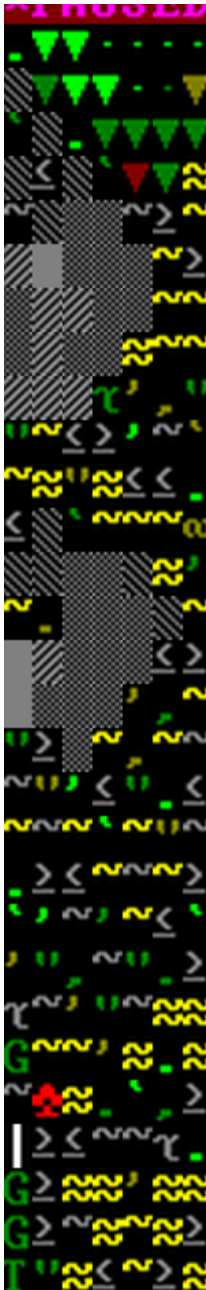
The corpse in my hands ripped itself free and with surprising nimbleness whipped in mid-air to face me. The link was gone, and I felt no connection at all to the thing before me. With another yell, I threw myself into battle with the beast, the worryingly still silhouette of the soldier lying beside my feet. That storm whipped around us, going faster, faster, faster. The streak of light piercing it all seemed to pulse in time to my strikes.

The Maiden stabs The 'Highmax28' Seshalâth's corpse in the left hand from behind with her +iron spear+, tearing apart the muscle!
A motor nerve has been severed!
The +iron spear+ has lodged firmly in the wound!
The Maiden twists the embedded +iron spear+ around in The 'Highmax28' Seshalâth's corpse's left hand!
The Maiden stabs The 'Highmax28' Seshalâth's corpse in the upper body from behind with her +iron spear+, tearing the muscle and tearing apart the left lung!

I landed the final blow, and the corpse shuddered, the madness shooting back towards the source then shooting outwards again as a wall of air which knocked me over. Dazed, I looked up in time to see that white streak, brilliant now in the absence of the dark, shoot down into the body of the fallen soldier lying beside me. Shuddering, the man got onto his knees and looked around, awe in his eyes. "By....by Armok, what happened? I.. I feel...strange" he said with a confused look. "This isn't my body...all I remember is...my...my death. What happened!" Eyes roving around the room, the soldier stood up. No, I thought with a jolt of realisation. Highmax stood up. Eyes settling on Apiks, he stumbled forward. "Apiks...what happened?" "Saying this, he stumbled and fell to the ground, out cold. Grunting, I stood up. This had.... ended strangely. Shouting for the doctor, I left the arena

7th Opal:

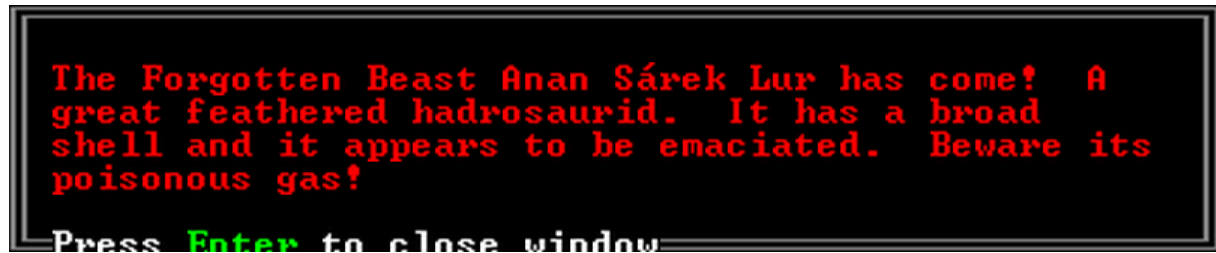
I sense an evil on our borders, a growing sense of wrongness. Running to the battlements, I look to the horizon and see...



Gamers! What is this, they are attacking the Haxxors? Armok must not be in as firm control as he would wish. The Gamers kill the Haxxors and leave, leaving a tide of thoughts in my head. If Armok cannot control his minions, can he control me?

I feel a grasping in my head, a searching. Throwing back my head, I scream my pain, the sound echoing through the halls. Forumites all over the fort look to me, fear writ large on their faces. There has been talk among them, talk of my inability to lead! Bah, they know nothing! Doubling over in pain, I grit my teeth. I. WILL. STAND. With another roar, I lurch to my feet, throwing my will against that of Armok itself. It made no difference, my efforts like a fly trying to get through a glass wall. Like the tide changing, Armok withdrew. Slowly. Painfully. Letting me know he could stay if he wished. A sibilant whisper echoed in my mind. "So, you think to best me in a battle of wills?" The voice held an eternity of dark amusement, as vast as the night itself. "Well, if you think so well prepared, let us see how you fare against more...strenuous

circumstances. Fading from my mind with an empty chuckle, Armok passed an image to me, written in the blood of the damned.



10th opal:

Some migrants have arrived, despite the danger.

Migrants arrived. Thank goodness! Our population count has taken a turn for the better! My personal goal, to make the fort stronger than when I found it, to make it capable of withstanding both Armok and Fain, has been met. I must...leave the position of leader. I have chosen one to take my place, Elephant Parade Hopefully he will be as strong as his namesake. Do not misunderstand, I stand down with regret. But through me, Armok has too much power. As I stand down, I remain a puppet, but a useless puppet. He will now discard or leave me. While I hope for the latter, only the coming days will tell. The Light save me. The Light save Necrothreat!

Chapter VIII

The Rule of Elephant Parade

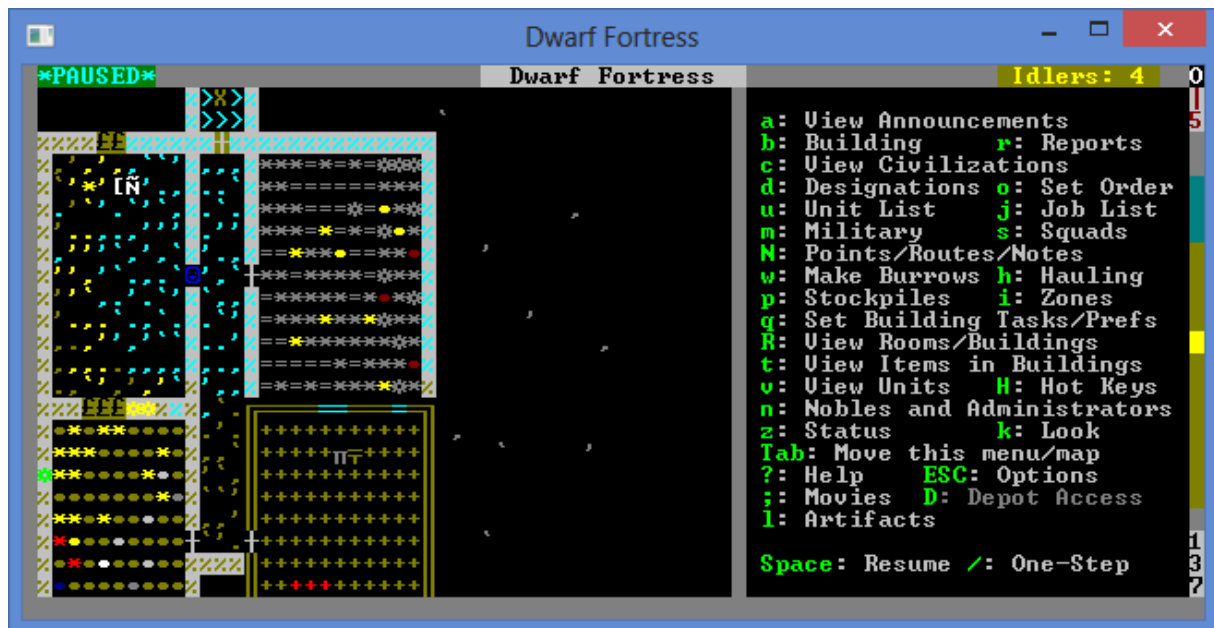
Diary of Elephant Parade, Overseer

I seem to have been appointed overseer of this place. Though I am new to this task, I hope that I will be able to do an admirable job and retire loved, instead of hated.

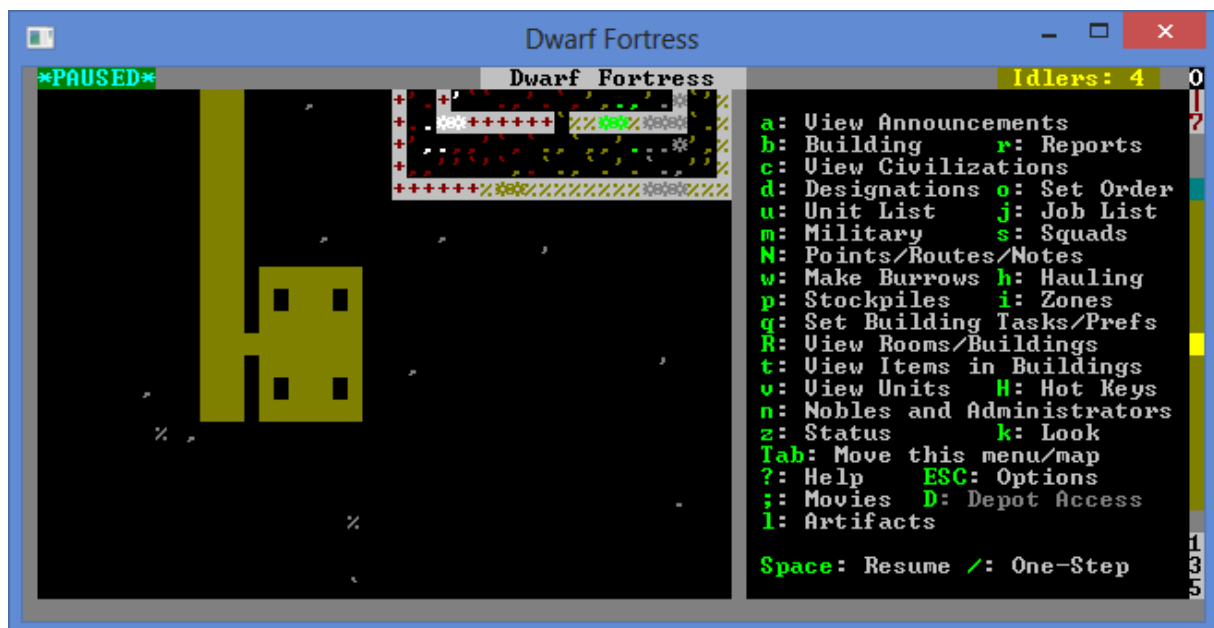
1st of Granite: There seems to be orders to dig out a massive hole. The miners lack anything else to do, so I leave the seemingly pointless endeavour alone.

2nd of Granite: Many of the currently existing rooms lack doors, chests, and cabinets. I shall fix this, for the brave forumites deserve no less.

3rd of Granite: The fortress is haunted by foul spirits! I must deal with this immediately!



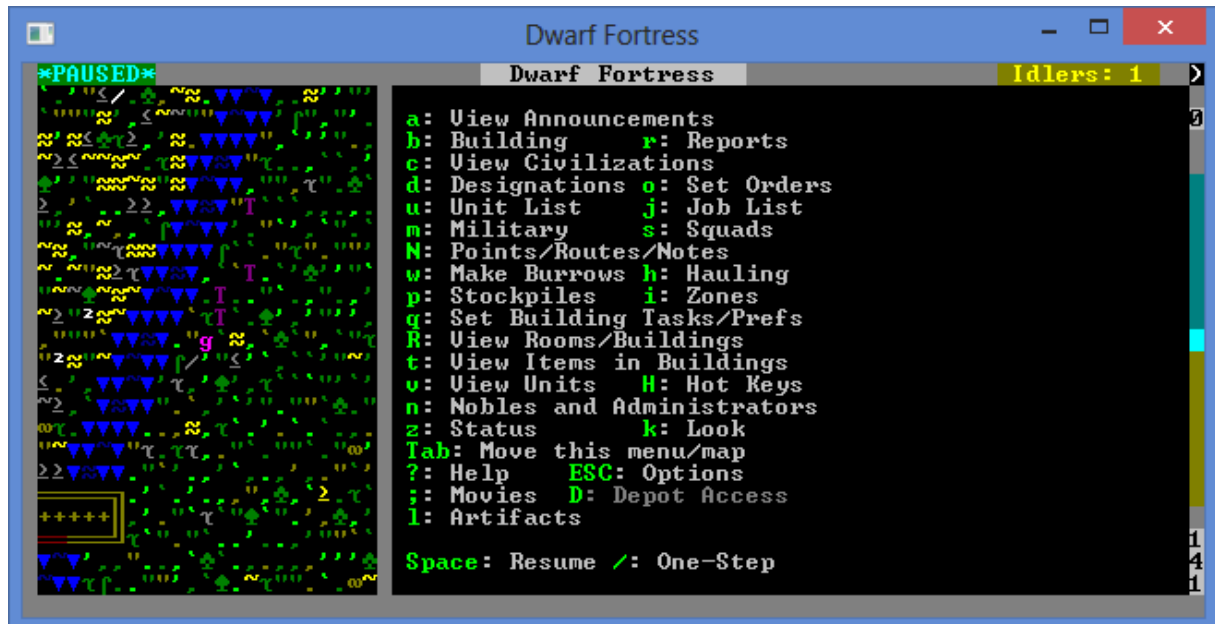
4th of Granite: I have begun construction of my tomb. It may seem a bit early, but a wise dwarf thinks ahead!



5th of Granite: I have ordered the masons to engrave slabs. I hope that this will put the spirits to rest.

20th of Granite: The stonecrafters are refusing to engrave slabs. They seem unaware that this is causing the ghosts' torment.

21st of Granite: I have decided to begin construction of an outdoor pasture for the livestock, as they will otherwise starve to death.



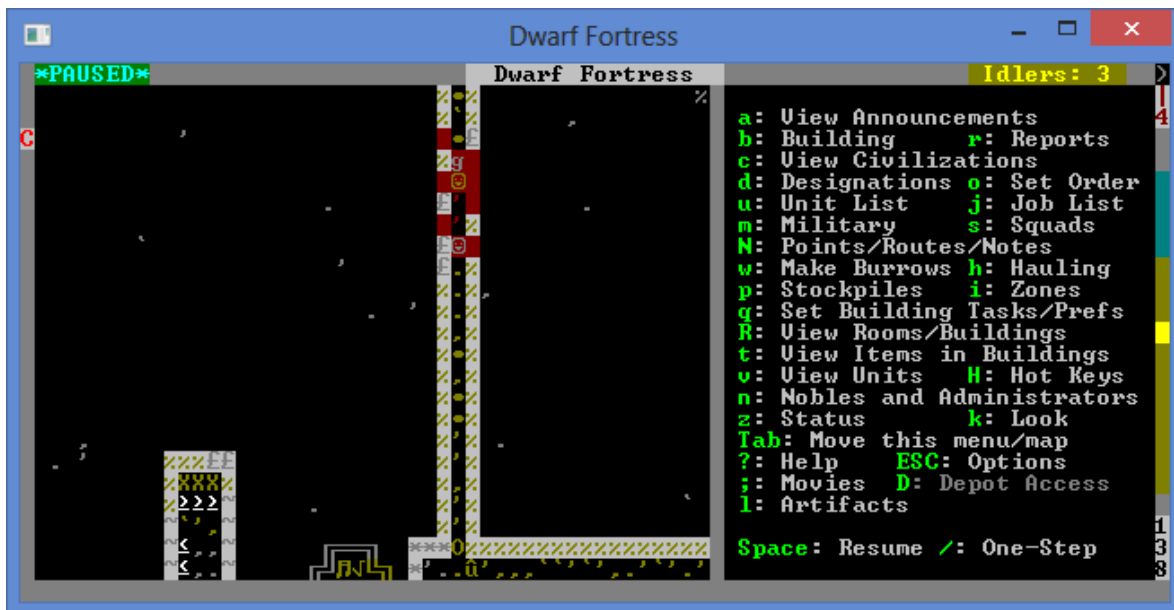
3rd of Slate: A troll ambush has struck, led by a troll lord! This is bad news indeed, as I had recently removed a temporary wall in the north. If we are lucky, the masons will finish building a new wall before the trolls can get there.

~~~Diary of Elephant Parade, Forumite~~~

3rd of Slade: Disaster has struck! Forumites are going outside!

4th of Slade: I order all my forumites to enter a previously existing burrow.

6th of Slade: Well, the fact that all the masons were unable to build one wall, even after they were ordered not to waste time stockpiling things, means that the trolls have invaded the base.

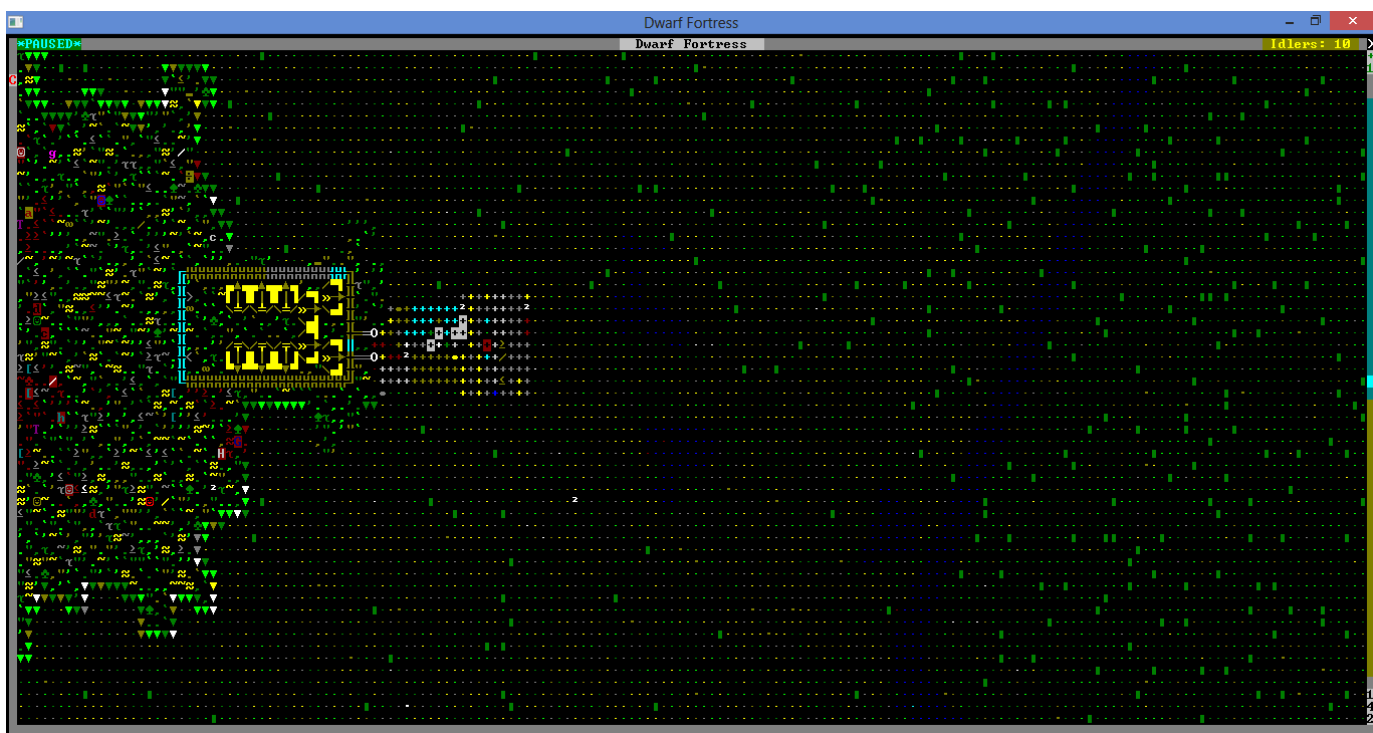


26th of Slade: Some migrants have arrived, despite the danger. These guys are really determined.

27th of Slade: They arrived pretty close to the trolls. That's not good.

28th of Slade: The trolls have begun the slaughter. They started by killing a puppy.

1st of Felsite: The wise migrants have fled. Most of the other migrants have been killed. On that bright note, I shall take a break from writing in this journal.



3rd of Felsite: A few migrants have been murdered by trolls. Not surprising, really.

5th of Felsite: A couple of migrant hunters are shooting down a troll!

6th of Felsite: The troll was slain, but another group of troll hammermen has arrived. It is led by a sacred renown, whatever that is.

8th of Felsite: Oh dear. There may be a link to the outside that I am not aware of. I must track it down, before it is too late!

10th of Felsite: We have been ambushed by more spearmen and a sacred monk!

14th of Felsite: We have been attacked by Necrothreaders and their army of thread zombies! Oh dear.

15th of Felsite: And a few Necrothreader snatchers, too, just for good measure.

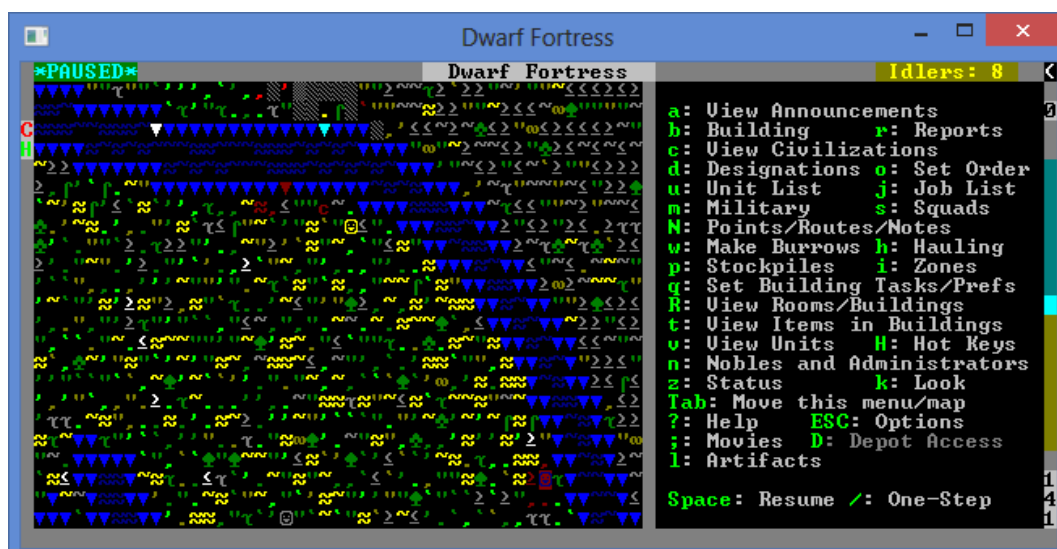
16th of Felsite: Oh hey, a Necrothreader ambush. Since things weren't bad enough already.

17th of Felsite: Another Necrothreader ambush! Also, some fires seem to have started. I wonder what that's all about.

18th of Felsite: Oh hi, Necrothreader ambush. We were expecting you. Would you like a cup of tea?

20th of Felsite: An elven caravan has arrived! If they have any brains, they'll turn back from this chaos.

21st of Felsite: As a fire rages on the other side of the stream, and despite the two thread zombie archers taking potshots at him, a dwarf drinks from the stream.



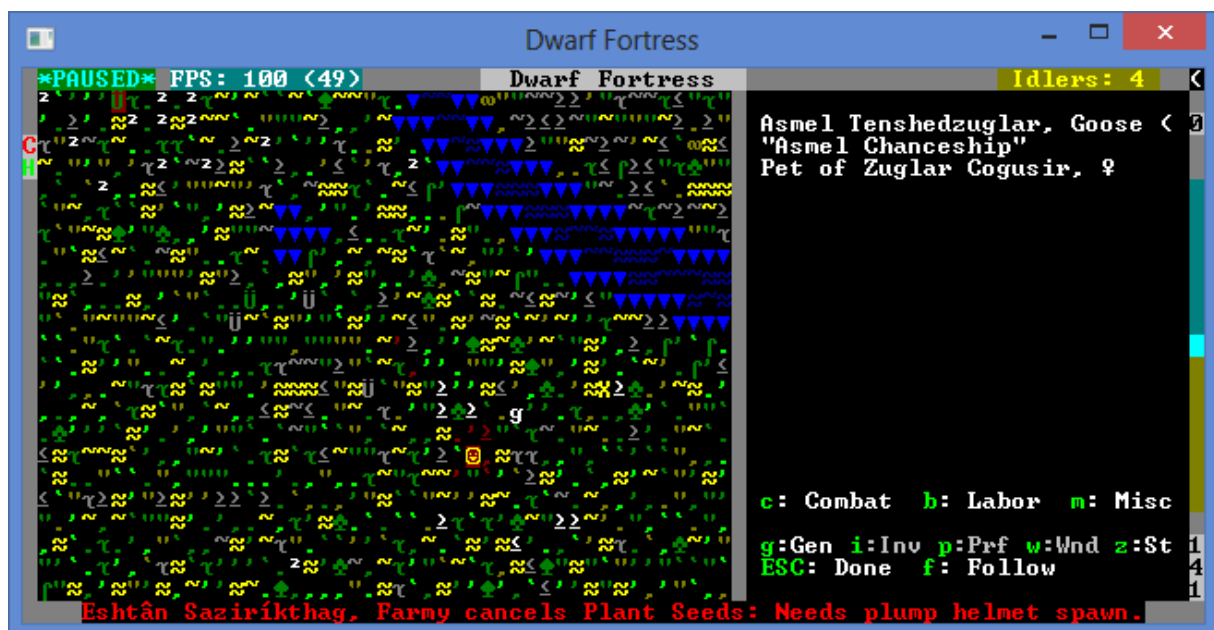
1st of Hematite: The undead are prone to sudden outbursts of emotion.



2nd of Hematite: I have mandated the construction of spam. I don't know why. I just felt like it.

17th of Hematite: A mason is in a furtive mood! This really, really isn't what we need right now.

18th of Hematite: He has claimed a Magma Glass Furnace. I hope we have the materials he needs.



20th of Hematite: Run, goat! Run!





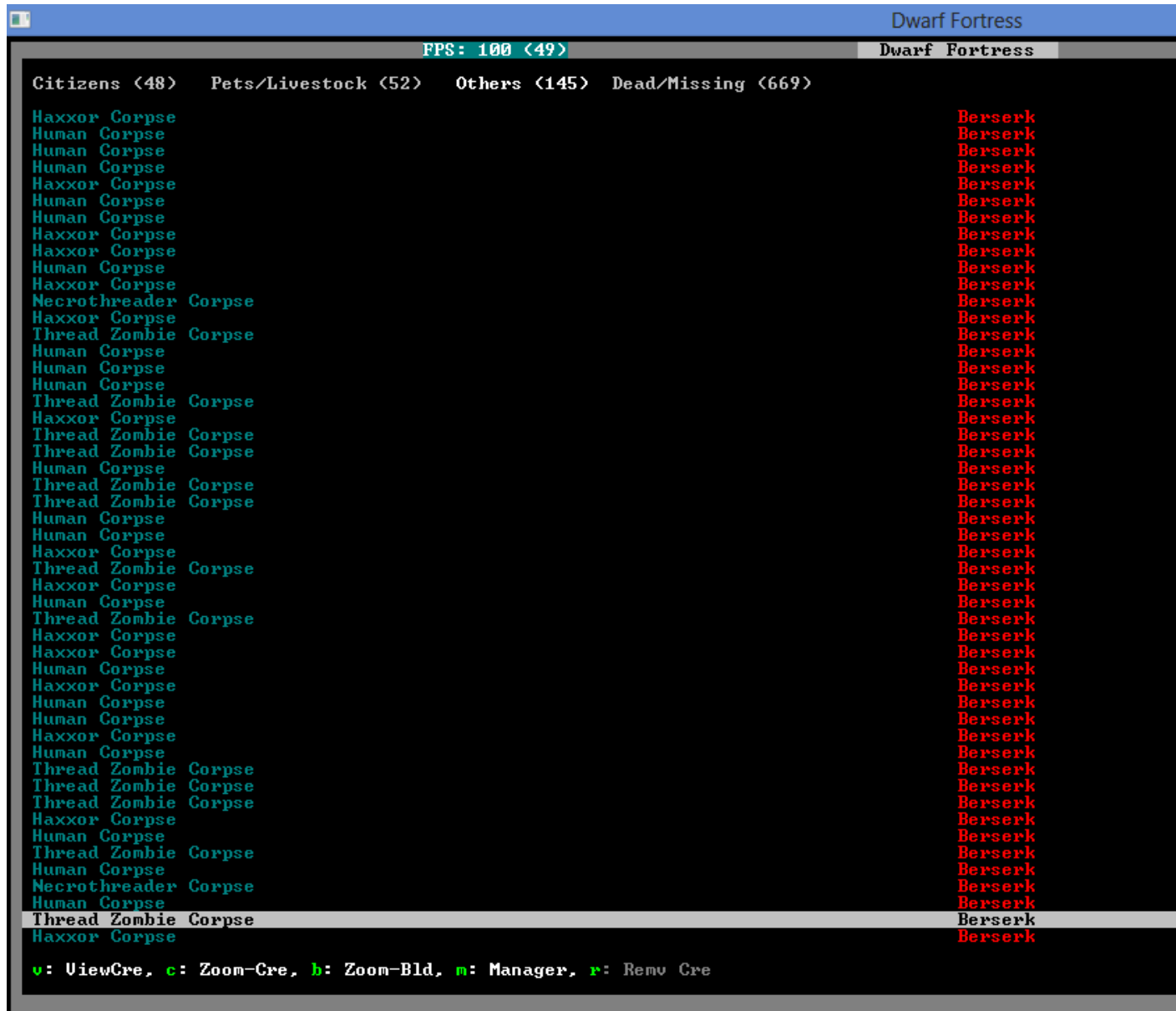
8th of Malachite: I certainly hope that it can't get in.

11th of Malachite: Migrants are very, very stupid. Seriously. They're just feeding the trolls.

4th of Galena: The craftsforumite Inod has gone insane. I have dispatched the militia to kill him.

5th of Galena: The militia reached Inod and struck him down. Poor guy. Hopefully, this doesn't happen again with the next mood.

14th of Galena: Well.



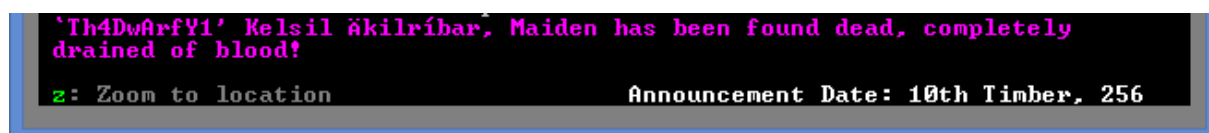
This would be rather bad, if not for the fact that we are safely sealed away.

15th of Galena: We seem to have been ambushed by Haxxors. Honestly, this is starting to get a bit silly. It's not like they can get in.

2nd of Limestone: Even more undead? I estimate that there are currently 230 non-forumites around. This is simply ridiculous.

10th of Timber: Nothing has happened for a while. We've just been getting along while the outside world is in chaos. We have plenty of food and other necessities, but life is pretty boring. A few Haxxors showed up, but that's pretty much it.

Wait.



This is a problem.

11th of Timber: The vampire is probably one of the migrants stuck outside, now that I think about it. I'll have to make sure, though.

13th of Timber: More Haxxors. Don't they have anything better to do?

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### In the mind of Th4DwArfY1

The waiting...the waiting is killing me. Armok...he is haunting me, slipping through the halls of Necrothreat like the slimy snake he is. Now that I see the end of my days, those halls seem to glimmer with the lights of promise and life. I shake my head, perplexed. What has come over me? Necrothreat has never been a happy place. In fact, looking around from where I am crouched behind some crates in the storage room, I again see the soot stained and industry-mangled walls of my home. Yet, I still see that...promise, what it could have been. I must be mad.

I was wrong. When I named ElephantParade my successor, I was wrong. I thought he would be a figure of strength, forcing the influence of Armok from our grime-filled halls. And yet he *praises* the name of Armok! I wish it could have been different, that I could have been the strong one who saved our land. But I was weak. I knew that once I took that step, I would be crushed by the wrath of Armok. And I valued my life, given though it was with the sadistic amusement of Armok. I valued that I could walk and see, breathe and *live*. No matter what I said, what I thought, I wanted to live. And that stopped me from doing what I should.

I freeze. I dare not breathe, barely even thinking for fear I will be heard. He has found me again. I knew he would, as he has in each room I have sought refuge in. Eyes straining against the dark, I look for the figure that I could somehow sense was slinking in the shadows which pooled murkily at the far end of the room. That sense

has saved my skin more than once. The figure makes no noise, and only with supreme effort can be seen. Craning forward for a better look I bang my head against the low-slung ceiling. Shock rippled through me, and I became as still as the stone around me. The noise of head hitting roof broke the silence. After the hollow thunk, the silence surged softly back.

I waited, and he waited. Then, like a cobra striking with quick and lethal movements, the boxes I cower behind are ripped away. Framed by the light which pooled in behind him, I finally got my first proper look at my murderer. Tall (for a Forumite) and lithe, he had a strong face and pointed chin. Emerald eyes gazed imperiously down at me. He smiled, baring his teeth. The light glinted off the pair of fangs which jutted down from his upper teeth. A deep, male voice came from that mouth. "Ready or not, here I come" Then, a blur, he leaped at me and sank his fangs into my neck. My last thought before my lifeblood was drained out of me was that I had been foolish to believe Armok would forget about me. He is the god of Blood, and he exacts a price. Then the darkness flooded in, and I knew no more.

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### Journal of ElephantParade, forumite

25th of Timber: As we currently lack statues, I have instead lined my tomb with cabinets. This will come in handy if I ever rise from the dead; even zombies need to stay organized!

2nd of Opal: One of our dwarves seems to be somewhat insane. He claims that there are no seeds, but we have over 600 seeds!

4th of Opal: Hmm.



Maybe it'll kill the invaders?

6th of Opal: A dwarf has been taken by a mood! This is bad news.

2nd of Obsidian: We have no alcohol! I must get a brewer to work on this immediately.

3rd of Obsidian: I have figured out three possible vampires, and marked them as such.

14th of Obsidian: Zulgar has been drained of blood!

15th of Obsidian: We have been ambushed by trolls. However, they invaded on the far side of the river, which is currently on fire. In fact, they are right next to the fire. Anyway, I'm going to take a nap.

*...Eh? What do you mean, I was sleeping on the job? You've decided to replace me? ...You were going to replace me three weeks ago, but you couldn't find me? Well, enjoy. Good luck; you'll need it.*

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### **In the Mind of Th4DwArfY1**

A cruel joke has been played upon me again. Armok's strings were still on me, and he jerked me into the world of the living yet again just as I was beginning to welcome the coolness of death. It would appear that I am now...married...to the thing that killed me in the first place! Somewhere in his castle of candy in the outer reaches of the circus, Armok is laughing. Not a deep laugh of mirth, but a dry grating of stone on stone, as if all the centuries of his existence were pressed into one sound. *You are my plaything*; he whispers in my ear. *It has been a while since you monkeys have amused me...you should be proud.* That was the last I heard of Armok, at least to the present day. But I feel his eyes, and am still jerked around by his strings. I cannot tell anyone that my spouse is the blood-sucking fiend which terrorises us, I can't! I try, for I wish to be strong, but the strength of Armok is as of that of mountains. Immense, unscalable. Every day, I go to my room and it is waiting for me. Fangs extended, eager for my blood. But it never kills me, no. That would be mercy, and the name of Armok is not mercy. It is torture. That is my daily routine...torture. Please, help me, if there is anything out here, just please!

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## Chapter IV

### The Rule of Ruhn, The Rebuilder

#### 22 Granite, 257

We found that fool Elephant Parade sleeping while the forum is under attack, and decided to sacrifice him.

Wait, what am I saying? Truly there is some evil within this place. Who would ban a loyal forumite who did their best, even if it did involve accusing my good friend Gaul of being a vampire. My name is Perrin Cobalteyes and I will take up the banhammer for our forum and set things in order!

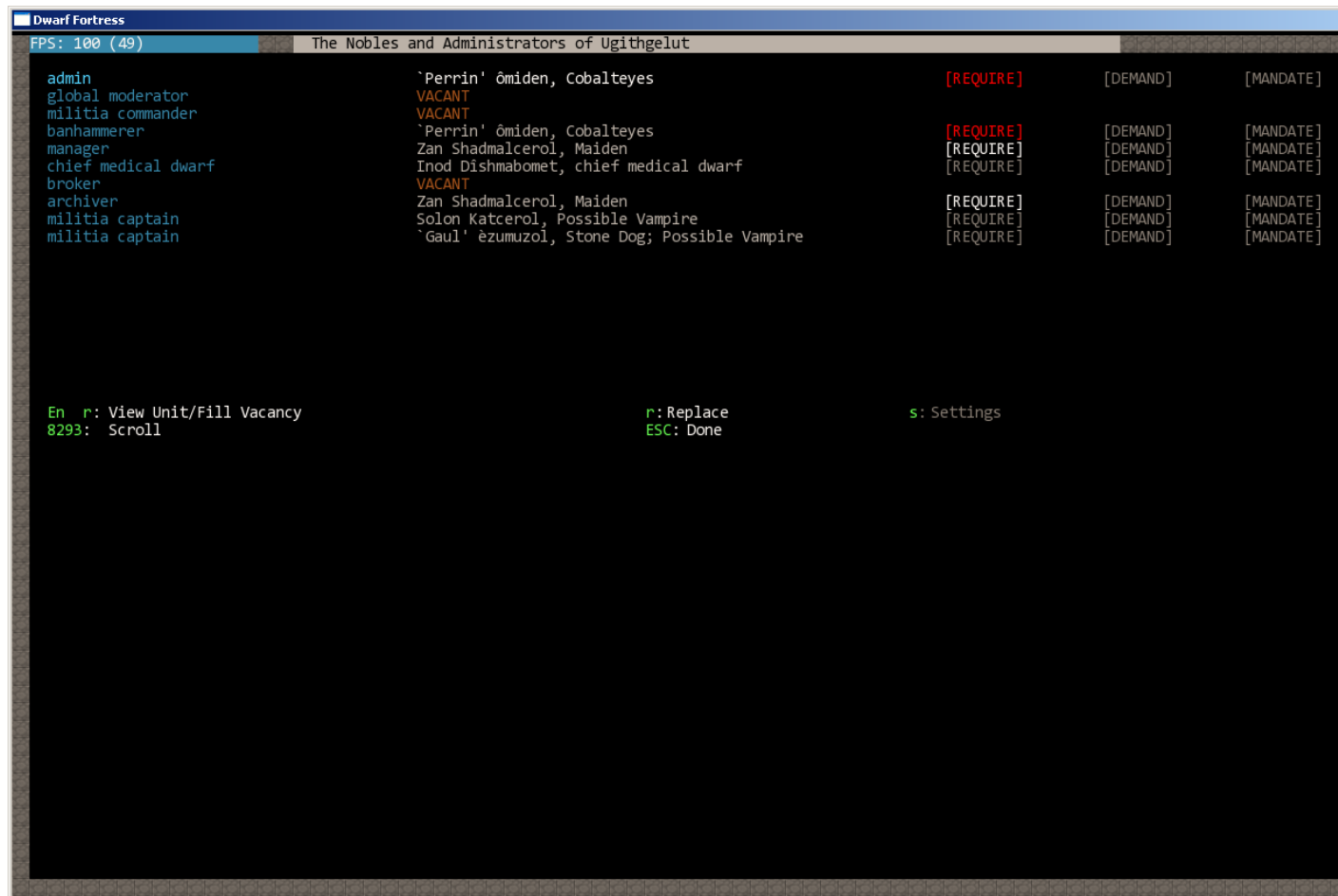


Why me? Well, my wife went to this forum but she was brutally killed last year. Many have died in the recent attacks, and our moderators don't seem to be taking everything into account when making the important decisions. After careful consideration, I believe my skills can be used for the good of all!

My first order of business will be to interview forumites to fill new staff positions. Zan



is working herself to death as the Manager, Archiver, and a Maiden of the spears. I guess we can make Elephant Parade the Broker, his love of riches can be put to use for the benefit of all. This Zulban fellow seems to be good at keeping track of things. NAV knows a lot about making a good brew, and that attention to detail and care for quality is why he's our new Manager. That's enough interviews for now, thanks for coming folks. We will meet later to look for a new Global Admin and Militia Leader.



OK, now let's take a tour and see how everyone's doing for living quarters. Wait, we are still under attack? I will grab my banhammer and go see what can be done.

There was some commotion by the main gates!! I held the banhammer ready, but it turns out a new baby was born. +1 members already, we should celebrate when this is over.

## 27 Granite

Another girl was born! I confirmed her membership right away. I've been looking out the fortifications for a while now but don't see any activity. The anti-virus says we are still under attack so I don't know. Maybe we should open the firewall and see if anything tries to break in?

## 2 Slate

I am still thinking of a way to lift the siege of haters from our forum. Meanwhile, I awarded Solon Katcerol a medal today for killing an evil monster. They say its name was Usu Phantom Urn. Surely it was a servant of the Dark One. There is a nasty rumour going around that she is a vampire. I'm not sure if it is true, Urist pointed out Solon was seen sleeping in the dorm not long ago.

## 3 Slate

Our drink stocks are still low. I've asked a few others to help out with farming and brewing to see if that will speed things up.

## 4 Slate

The fools! While reviewing the kitchens it became apparent we have no fishery, but 100's of fish that just need to be de-boned.

## 7 Slate

The facts are starting to point to Udib being a vampire. I might have to lock him up for a bit to be sure.

## 11 Slate

A new baby boy was born. I took extra time to be sure he wasn't going to troll us, then approved membership.

## 20 Slate

I decided that we need more quivers for our forumites. 3 should do nicely.

## 21 Slate

The maidens did well, and killed the strange Troll who looked like a porcupine a few weeks ago.

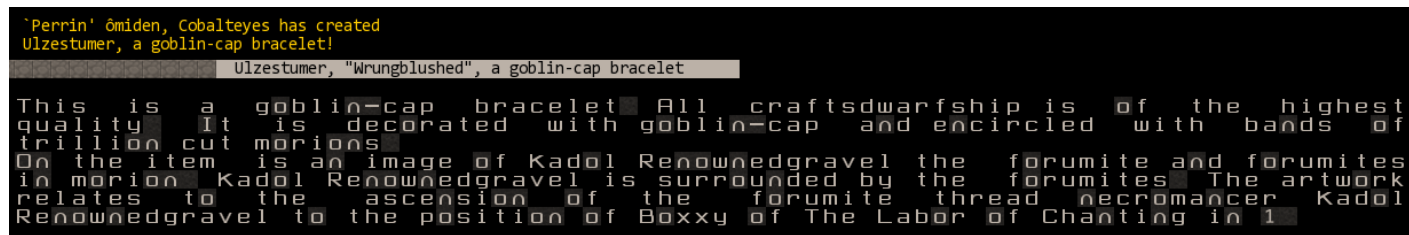
## 4 Felsite

I feel like making something...



## 12 Felsite

It is complete! It took a bit of doing, but this bracelet came out pretty nice. Now I think I have a way for us to deal with these attacks. Come and listen ...



## 17 Felsite

We saw smoke rising from the Northeast, but didn't see any attackers. I decided it would be best to close the bridge and let the Aiel train some more.

## 22 Felsite

We have given the Maidens and Stone Dogs some more experience killing trolls. Solon the beast slayer wants to be called Sulin now, and has taken over coordinating the Aiel's training.

## 24 Hematite

It's been a while since my last entry, but things have been going well. Our drink stocks are over 300 again, so we can focus more on burying the dead. There are still so many, we need to let them rest.

## 1 Malachite

I got everyone together to see how my quivers were coming. Urist finally spoke up and said that there are no leatherworks!! I ordered a new room to be dug, it looks like I'll have to make them myself.

## 28 Malachite

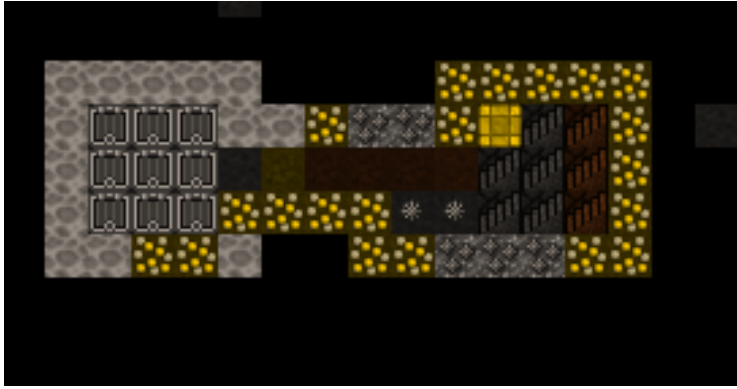
Since Udib is probably a vampire, I let him go outside to grab some things. Turns out a FPS gamer found him. We got Udib inside safely, but lost sight of the gamer in the excitement.

## 19 Galena

We spotted some goblins among the smoke in the Northeast. I doubt they will survive, poor souls. Looking at the firewall around the trade depot, I'm not sure how the outer layer works. Maybe it is time to pay a visit to our webmaster and find out?

## 8 Limestone

Today we completed work installing hatch covers on the lower stairs. Good heavy iron that should serve us well if we need to cut off traffic. This is just the first step in my plans to upgrade security for the lower entrance. Down there at the forges... it smells wrong, I don't know how else to describe it. Having the hatches puts me at ease a little more.



### 13 Limestone

Th4DwArfY1 was complaining about not being able to store his items while I was designing a new mud-free well system. Looking him over I noticed his left foot and right hand are gone. His left lower arm and hand looked pretty mangled as well. In fact, he isn't holding a spear or shield! I fear that is one Aiel who will not survive when we dance the spears.

### 23 Limestone

I think we need 2 more quivers, someone please get to work on that. Spamming and derailing could be the key to driving of the haters, and we need to make preparations.

### 28 Limestone

I've been keeping a careful eye on the possible vampire, but all he does is plant seeds all day long, every day. If Udib is a vampire, I would say he is a hard worker at the least, and that is an admirable quality.

### 3 Sandstone

I made a small "jail cell" next to the food stockpile, in case anyone acts out in a rash way.

### 7 Sandstone

Eshtan is acting strangely.

### 18 Sandstone

Another ambush in the Northeast, and the fires continue to burn up there.

### 21 Sandstone

I think Eshtan might want some kind of fancy glass for his project. However, we have no kiln to make the pearl ash? I suppose we will need to work on that next.

### 28 Sandstone

... Now they tell me we don't have an Ashery to make the potash. These side projects are taking too much time.

### 19 Timber

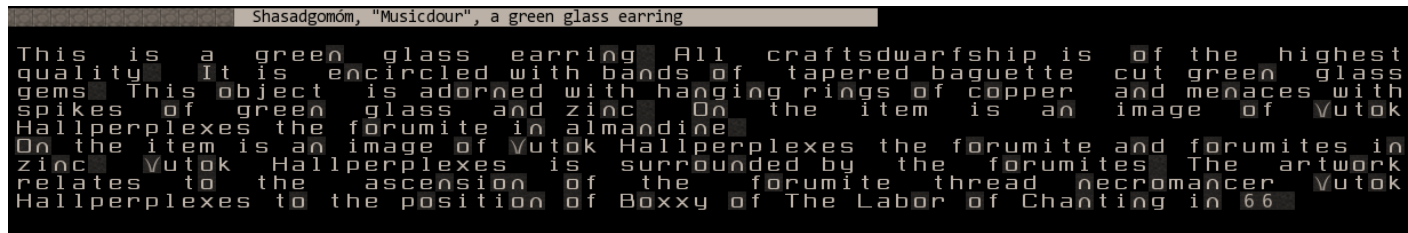
Hahahaha, more goblins in the Northeast. It's a hotspot fellas, you will only feed the flame war going on up there!

### 6 Moonstone

We managed to get everything that Eshtan wanted, I wonder what it will be?

### 10 Moonstone

Wow, such detail on an earring. This is truly a feat of craftforumship.



### 1 Obsidian

I visited the tombs today. This is becoming a popular spot for people to come and pass the time. Perhaps a proper statue garden would be better?

### 29 Obsidian

This is hard work, I'm going to step back for a while and let someone else take the lead. Whoever it is, I will encourage them to be careful. It's dangerous outside the firewall, that flame war is still going strong.

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## Interspace

Beat. Beat. Beat.

Is that my heart? I do not know. I am walking, head high, through the lack lustre halls. I am walking, trying to find someone, anyone, to whom I can speak. It happened again...IT was waiting for me. I feel so drained...no! I will not give in. I must walk. That's what I'm doing, walking, though my legs feel like rubber, though my heart feels like a drum and my head feels like it is being pounded by the hammers I can hear ringing many floors below. I must walk!

And I do. Walking, slipping, sliding. Making a path through the bustling corridors and packed rooms. Somewhere, fuzzily at the back of my mind I know that there shouldn't be so many people. They are the dead, of both Necrothreat I and II mingling with the alive. Neither group seems to be aware of the other. I stumble through the dead, walk into the living. Some shout curses, others offer me help; all believe me to be drunk.

The irony is not wasted even on my sleep deprived and blood lacking self. I am not drunk, but drunk from. Still I walk, still I hold my head high. My muscles strain with the effort, veins bulging with exhaustion. The people now begin to look at me with concern, for no drunk Forumite ever looks worse than when they are sober. But I walk with my head high, and I keep my face as of the stone which surrounds us. They see what they think is strength and, reassured, walk on. I wish they were right.

There! Ahead, a flash of fancy clothing which is so impractical only those high in authority would wear them. I myself wore them once, what seems like lifetimes ago. I manage a weak, wan smile. I suppose, for me, it was a few lives and bodies ago. But my mind wanders from my purpose. It is getting harder to concentrate.... Shuffling forward, I put my hand on the embroidered shoulder. The person under the cloth gives a jump and turns around. "Why, Dwarf, whatever's the problem? Are you okay?" He says with concern as he sees my ghoulishly pale face and purple lips.

"R.. R.. uhn. I am... well. Well enough." I manage to squeeze past my unwilling lips. "I need to...to talk to you. The deaths...I know the cause...blood. The blood is.. taken from them. It is taken from me!" With a fevered intensity I grab the cuffs of his jacket and pull him close to my face. Our noses nearly touching, I continue. "It is HIM. You know who I mean. Him, he has sent a creature amongst us....one bonded to me...you must...help. I need help" Ruhn looked confused, then a partial realisation dawned on him

"You mean"...he lowered his voice to a whisper "*Him?* He who haunts the shadows and the dreams, the font of evil? *Armok himself?*" With supreme weariness, I nod. A look of eagerness, eagerness for the kill enters his eyes. I begin to tell him the name of the creature sent to haunt us, but a voice drifting across the hall cuts me off.

"Dear, there you are. Are you all right? Thanks for looking after him Ruhn, he's been feverish and babbling nonsense. The doc thinks he has an infection of some kind...something about puncture holes getting infected. Will you help me bring him back to our room?" Gasping with horror, I let Ruhn's coat slip through my limp fingers, the bunched cloth suddenly let free. My knees like jelly, I sink to the floor. It found me. I was too late, and it found me. Tense joints giving way, I topple to the side. The last words which swim towards me through the darkness are in Ruhn's voice "Sure...er, yes, sure. Of course I will help. *Punctures*, you say? How odd..."

I awaken. It is cold, chill even, despite the bed sheet pulled up to my neck. Slowly I crack open my eyes. I see no one and, made bold by this, try to sit up. A darker shadow in the corner stirs and the vampire stands up and walks into the light, a sadistic grin twisting its face. I cringe, and hate myself for it. My only defence is that I had endured its...administrations... for months, my resolve being gradually ripped apart.

"So, you thought to betray me did you?" it spat through its smile. Odd how its eyes always stay the same expressionless wall and its smile is so changeable, expresses so many levels of spite, hate and... hunger. "Well, I'll soon teach you why you should



obey me." Its smile grew deeper, more evil, and it drew from behind its back an axe with a wicked-looking spike. "Your friend Ruhn lent this to me. You know, his real name is Peruhn? Pronounced Perrin he says. Strange fellow, but he gave me the axe he carries everywhere when I asked for it. Seemed glad to give it in fact. I said I was going to chop some fire wood. It leaned in closer to me and shivered, the smile never leaving its face. "It is cold in here, isn't it? Well, time to get chopping" With that, it casually chopped off my left foot and then my right hand, smile never slipping from its face.

I freeze, mind numb. Then, like the tide coming in I feel the pain, a sea of fire which threatens to sweep me away. The room seems to shake, especially the door, and a growing cloak of darkness drops slowly before my eyes. My stumps throb like erupting volcanoes, spewing red hot blood everywhere, the wall, floor. The vampire seems entranced by it. The door bursts open, and I see Apiks, Highmax and a troop of the spear-forumites framed in it. I feel a vague amusement, despite the overwhelming pain, at seeing Highmax holding a spear. And then the darkness falls softly into place, and the rest is hidden from me.

I wake screaming this time, thrashing and kicking, feeling my tender but blessedly no longer bleeding stumps rub up against the bed sheets. Gradually I subside as I feel comforting hands petting me and hear soothing words whispered in my ear. I look around me and see I am in hospital, Apiks, Highmax and some nurses surrounding the bed. I collapse back into the pillow. "What...what happened?" I whisper, voice hoarse.

"You're lucky to be alive, is what happened", one of the nurses said sternly. "No more thrashing, and get some rest!" She glared at Highmax "I'd make you leave, the both of you, were you not the overseer, Highmax. But make it quick, or feel my anger." With a sniff she twirled and stalked away, the other nurses following like an indignant gaggle of geese.

Highmax flashes a boyish grin and sticks his tongue out at her retreating back, but Apiks is more serious. "We were talking to Ruhn. He said he was retiring and was going to pass his position to Highmax, but also mentioned his run in with you and your talk of evil and blood. And then that mention of you being bonded to this evil, and then of punctures, and..."

Highmax leaps into the conversation "And we thought that the only evil bond any Forumite could have was marriage, so we went and investigated. Good thing too. We found it gazing at your blood. It didn't even fight us, seemed focused only on the blood, so we locked it away and got you down here double-quick"

I start laughing, tears streaming down my face. "It's over. Over. Thank you. THANK YOU" I yelled at the ceiling, at anything that would listen to me and feel pride in helping. "thank you", I whisper, tears streaming down my face. "thank you."

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## Chapter X

### The Rule of Highmax28, the Renouncer

*Months pass. Day after day, Highmax continues to work as overseer... Except he's so busy still grabbing his gear, Perrin took over as overseer. When Highmax returned, searching high and low, Perrin had already watched a year go by. The year is now 258, and Highmax begins his true second reign of Highmax, Dœfus Swords Enthusiast. Those who were there for the Threadromancer's speech kept it to themselves. Only until recently, have they begun speaking. Ghosts are few in number now. Highmax still is horrible with swords and must retrain himself in his preferred art of war. The great flames of Armok purge the fields of any life (or un-life) and the citizens of Necrothreat await the end of the purge to reclaim the surface. And they await for better skills in combat as well... Limbs still cling to the trees, hoping to escape the purge. None can escape its wrath. Only those in the halls of Necrothreat are safe. Perhaps the Threadromancer was wrong about the god of blood? Perhaps he was right, but decided another approach must be taken. Only the gods know truly. Highmax ponders on the reclaiming of the surface, the voices still there but so far away he cannot understand them or recognize them. Let the second reign of Highmax begin... Gods have mercy on us all...*

#### 25th of Granite, 258: The Flames Die

The fires of Armok have died down finally. I don't think anything survived that. Those things in the trees made it, but barely. Those flaming corpses are still there however. They're releasing a big smoke signal so we can tell where they are. If only I practiced with my sword more often, I could actually get those damned corpses to lie still. I'd lead every Maiden and Stone Dog out there into battle with DwArfY as my lieutenant. Yes, he's a cripple, but still skilled with his spear and wise in the knowledge of the gods. Some stories say he aided me in escaping necromancy, curing me almost. I know what happened in my mind and soul, but DwArfY dealt with my body, somehow bringing my mind and my soul back to the land of the living. And honestly, I never really told anyone about my ordeals in that nightmare. I don't think they need to know what it's like when Ur claims your body and soul. It brings chills down my back just to speak his name... I can't believe the very bastard that made us fall in our old home still yet lives... Perhaps these High Lord Threadromancers are a force to be reckoned with... And that poses another question; is Ur the greatest of them all and a god amongst them or are they ALL gods and the rest just unknown to us? I pray we never find out...

I actually was thinking about talking to DwArfY, Apiks and Perrin about this thought I had... Are the other High Lord Threadromancers Gods themselves? I can only hope they aren't...

Those voices are starting to become a nuisance. They keep me awake at night and

scare me sometimes. We don't have many ghosts so I have no idea what they could be. And the best part: nobody else can hear them. The others think I'm mad when I ask them about it. They thought I was crazy when I chose a sword as my weapon of choice, but now they must think I'm bat-shit insane... If I keep this up, they're gonna throw me into the jail cages thinking I've gone berserk... I'm hoping to restore order by the time I'm done this year. If all goes well, no Haxxors will show up \*writing appears a little shaky towards the end\*

#### 10th of Slate, 258: Elephant's Punishment

Had a wonderful conversation with Elephant Parade about the incident with switching my title to "Doofus". I wrote down what it went like mostly:

EP: You want me to do WHAT?

Highmax: You heard me.

EP: Isn't that dangerous?

Highmax: I'm overseer, you do as I say. Now get in there and start digging above that magma for that big deposit of gold!

EP: \*grumbles\*

It went pretty smoothly and I say it was well rewarded. He does dangerous crap and we get lots of gold. It's a win-win situation! Apiks decided to give him a hand with the safer side of the tunnels. We now have the forges up and running again. I also decided that we need better EVERYTHING. So I decided we're going to wipe the slate clean and make some new gear for our soldiers and rework the whole system. Military will be getting a big change in what they do, as will what we produce. Basically, if it's not helping us retake the surface or keep us alive, it's not going to be done. Why did I choose to dig out gold you ask? More specifically, I'm making an expansion to the forges but there was lots of gold there to begin with. Also, I heard rumours of there being some good ores by magma, so we're going to dig about the edges after EP is done risking his neck. Also gold doesn't hurt us if we can make some extra stuff with it, right?

#### 18th of Slate, 258: More Digging and Dead Cows

A cow was found dead today. I think the overcrowding of animals has taken a toll on them. Apiks has been snooping about the edges of the magma sea, sniffing out tetrahedrite and gold. We're mostly looking for iron but every little bit helps. The military has been reworked as well. We now have two "maiden" squads and one normal squad with myself and a maiden. DwArfY has been put into retirement for the military since I worry every time we spar that if I tap him with my sword he's gonna fall apart... He's been promoted to global moderator however so he can deal with

justice now, dispensing it however he chooses (I just hope without his spear). He's been given a new room, a study, and a dining room (it's all really one room that we're going to smooth over eventually).

#### 13th of Felsite, 258: Discovery and Arguments

We discovered something incredible today. And I recognized every little detail of it, though I don't remember where.

**→Raw adamantine! Praise the miners!**

I was glad we found this. It's a great weapon to use against the dead. Although Perrin and I disagreed about what we should do about this...

Perrin: "Are you mad!? Are you trying to get us killed!?"

Highmax: "I don't understand?"

Perrin: "Like hell! You're actually having Elephant Parade and the other miners dig out that cursed ore!?"

Highmax: "It's a powerful weapon that can help us defeat the enemy! Can you blame me for wanting to defeat the enemy?"

Perrin: "You've been acting weird since you were unzombified. You're not even the same as what others tell me! You're a great war-leader they said! Look at you! You're talking about using a dangerous weapon to fight the thread zombies!"

Highmax: "Burn me! We're fighting a losing war now! This may be able to turn the tide in our favour!"

Perrin: "I'd rather take my chances with Armok and the Dark One! You're insane if you think that can help us..."

He walked off rather enraged after that. I'm having the craft-forumites start extracting strands. As I told Perrin, we're fighting a losing war... And even though he might not know it, anything is better than being zombified... Even at the risk of using this cursed ore... On a better note, we got some more iron dug out for the forges, though I doubt we'll be using them much longer except for bolts maybe. Turns out we've been digging about too deep... Whoops...

#### 1st of Hematite, 258: Summertime Changes and Discussions

I know this is going to sound insane, which whoever is reading this probably already thinks so of me with everything I wrote down in here, but I stood outside on the roof with the unused catapult battery. I watched the smoke from the east and south rise. I smelt the summer air and felt its breeze... It was relaxing. I didn't smell blood, smoke, or even rotting bodies. It was an actual summer breeze, and it was wonderful... I wanted others to come up and share this with me but they just looked at me strange. Wonderful... I called up a small meeting amongst those who remained amongst the overseers and those who remained from the old Necrothreat. I told them about my ideas about the High Lord Threadnecromancers. Perrin didn't want to even look at me but came regardless. I hated using the cursed ore as well, but it was a necessary evil.

I told them about how I thought with the other High Lord Necrothreaders, being possible that there are more than Ur. Or that he may be the strongest to the point he is a god. I don't know for sure, but I think some believed one and others believed the other. I can't tell because I'm not the best with judge of intent... Maybe I'll ask them later... In the meantime, I got more swordsmanship I have to catch up on, with me losing all my skill in it and all...

#### 14th of Hematite, 258: Vampires Discovered! Only too late...

I was walking by to apologize to Perrin for what I did and was about to tell him that all the mining of the ores will cease after they're all used up, and I found something shocking: a vampire was draining his body of blood. He was already almost fully drained by the time I saw. I quickly reacted and grabbed a plank of wood and barred the door. The vampire turned as I slammed it shut and hissed as he clawed at the door. It won't hold for long. I apologized to Perrin for what I did, locking him in there as a vampire killed him and being unable to save him. I prayed that he would forgive me in the afterlife. At least he would be spared from the curse of Undeath, since they will never find his body. I got three masons to wall it off as I began to find that damn book of sealing that we had. I looked in my room when I heard screaming from the OTHER vampire. Apparently he is possessed now... and that's the least of our worries... I'm still halting the harvest of the blue ore. Why do you ask? I saw a small engraving on a piece of the cursed ore... And it was the symbol of the old Necrothreat... The voices sound too much clearer as I touched it also... I don't remember whose voice it was, but I know what its saying now...

#### **You can never escape**

#### 26th Malachite, 258: Laid to Rest and Ritual Book Found

We memorialized Perrin today. May his soul rest in the Valhalla that he dreamed of. May his mind always be at ease, and may his body be free of undeath...

-siltstone memorial to 'Perrin' ômiden-

This is a well-crafted siltstone memorial to 'Perrin' ômiden. The slab reads "In memory of 'Perrin' ômiden / Born 181 / Drained of blood by the forumite vampire 'VAMPIRE BITCH!' Bridgesilvers the Crystalline Portal of Noses in the year 258 / Creator of Wrunghlushed / Admin of The Barricade of Celebrating, 257 to 258 / Devoted father and husband".

We've come up with a compromise with the "Vampire Bitch" as we called her. She writes these strange runes on the walls and we might free her. She agreed and began at once. Jokes on her though because I found my ritual book and she's engraving the runes for the sealing spell. The vampire will never break free of her bonds as long as no one breaks the circle of runes that hold her. We'll begin once she says she's done. She doesn't seem very old for a vampire, so she might not be familiar with these rituals and spells. It worked with the Threadromancer, it'll work again this time.

The other vampire just went berserk also. Well, looks like we're never lowering that wall... The cursed ore mining is finished for good. I'm placing a tomb there to prevent anyone from ever digging there. Because no one will dig up a tomb, right? ...Right? It will be for DwArfY, Apiks and myself. I also just discovered the Jerkface Elephant Parade has 42 cabinets... I don't know why...

### 10th of Limestone, 258: The Second Sealing and Plans

I've been reading that book over and over and I think I could manage to work magic myself if I tried hard enough. It reads that I can probably do this. I don't know hoy but DwArfY, Apiks, the Maidens and the Stone Dogs are all against it... I asked why and they said I'm a male doing it... I brushed off their sexism and began to look over on the sealing spell again. It worked differently since we don't have statues or the vampire in a cage... So I'm making due by dealing with this myself. I muttered the incantation, focused all my willpower and energy into the seal, and I heard screams coming from inside the walls. I must've been doing SOMETHING right. All the sudden I hear "IT'S MOVING! THE BODY IS MOVING!" and I realized I'm doing the wrong incantation. I hear sounds of wood bashing bone and flesh and gasping. Then the runes on the outside began to glow blue and then the seal was placed just like before, without the silver wall of course.



After I did this, I started boasting a little that I can do magic. Then, halfway through the conversation I start vomiting and convulsing. I was literally shaking, not as violently as I was in that nightmare, but enough to notice. It was also shorter, but I got back up. I felt sick to my stomach and completely exhausted. I went to my room and rested a bit, thinking I must've overexerted myself during the sealing...

Maybe this magic thing isn't as good as I thought it would be...

### 27th of Limestone, 258: Infighting Amongst the Dead?

We just had reports of the dead fighting amongst each other and a yak corpse coming out on top... Strange... There are now 5 corpses that we can see out there, and no more smoke. Maybe if I can find a way to let us soldiers outside, we MAY be able to retake the surface! This is wonderful news!

Meanwhile, the tombs are getting smoothed over and looking a little abstract. It's for the best, because I don't want to find any more of the cursed ore, and I don't want ANYONE digging out anymore. I swear by the gods; I'll skin ANYONE alive if I find someone digging there! That symbol of old Necrothreat on the ore is a bad omen, and can only mean horrors beyond our recognition await us. Thankfully all the ore is drained and I can't find anymore. Much is getting smoothed out. Eventually it will be engraved and I'll try to have a warding spell placed down. That way no one will be hurt... I haven't tried using the magic again, speaking of which. I don't think I want to if I'm going to get sick again like before...

### 3rd of Sandstone, 258: Delays and Confusion

Well, there's one lever by the gates and two bridges. Either I can start pulling it and hope it doesn't fire an orbital magma cannon or ask previous overseers which lever opens the gates. I'm hoping we can take the battle to the enemy, especially since it's a yak, a haxxor that's overcooked, and the rest are limbs clinging to trees. Unless the flames of Armok come again, we should be able to hold out against the enemy if we can stand together as one unit. A spear wall would be the best tactic if we could get everyone to smarten up, but I doubt that would happen. And me being only a novice with my blade doesn't do me any justice... I swear, I would destroy entire armies of trolls back in the old home. But here? No, I'm stuck with a great skill with the spear for some reason... Anyway, I found this note and found it was nothing to be worried about. We're safe from the caverns, so we should be alright.

### 15th of Sandstone, 258: The Breeze of Freedom

Us soldiers stand guard at the raised gates. It's been years since we locked ourselves down here. Today, the enemy is gone, and we take what is ours. There are few zombies seen, and we're grateful of that. There was a haxxor corpse lying about, but I can no longer see it. The gates open once again, and we march outside. We're hit with a strong breeze of fresh air. The cool autumn air embraces us all as we stand

by the gates. There was ash everywhere and corpses greeted our eyes... But it was freedom at last from the depths. We tasted freedom and salvation now. I can only hope we can survive out here for a long time... Our only enemy at this time are the tree hugging corpses and a yak corpse that killed all the other zombies around it. Perhaps dissention amongst the zombies is our greatest weapon...

One idiot charged the yak. It proceeded to gore his face off... Let's keep away from him, shall we?

#### 18th of Sandstone, 258: Child Prodigy?

Timeless Bob, Lucky Blighter, withdraws from society... Odd... And we're still watching the gate, making sure everything is all right. Everything seems in order. After a while, we'll get to work on protecting our borders better... Specifically, relocating the ballista and catapult battery.

Another idiot ran out and charged the yak, now known as Cutstandards. He proceeded to block every shot... Until the Yak corpse proceeded to bust both of his kneecaps... WHAT KIND OF ARMY ARE WE RUNNING HERE!? I'm debating on hiding back inside from the yak ALONE!

#### 11th Timber, 258: Another Victim of the Yak

We're all back inside. We weren't ready for the topside yet. I did a headcount afterwards and then heard sounds of battle. I ran to the top of the catapult battery and watched DwArfY fight the Yak in single combat. It was a losing battle, but he fought valiantly. I watched as he kicked and stabbed at the beast with his spear, but to no avail. The beast bashed DwArfY's skull with his horn and decapitated the valiant dwarf. I knew he suffered much, and today he joins the others in the great beer hall in the sky... Where battles are fought equally, and his wounds will be healed of all of his wounds...

We held a bodiless funeral in our halls... He was a great warrior and perfect with his art. His spear work was great and I could never best him myself. He was under torment of the great war of the gods, but kept strong. He was held hostage by a vampire and stayed alive through all the torture. Even though he didn't share the pain of me in Undeath, he suffered pain of his own under Armok's command. My faith wane for all the gods, but DwArfY was a servant of Armok and held strong despite the endless torment of the god of blood. Death smiled its grin upon him today, but none can save him if he suffers the curse of Undeath as I did. If I have to, I will end his curse. I wish I could go back and fix it all... Even if I used my magic, what good can that do? I cannot change what has been done, only what will happen now...

Starting today, I'm enlisting many into the army. We shall create a force of soldiers far greater and stronger than ever heard of before. We will fight the last battle against the dead, and we'll take the battle to them. But today, we wait, and we train. All will

know the bravery of DwArfY how he held off Cutstandards single-handedly, despite his broken body...

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## In the Mind of Th4DwArfY1

The gates of Necrothreat grind closed behind me with an ominous thunk. I asked for this...for this chance to redeem myself. Why does it feel so painful to hear those gates close then? I asked for it, and I must go on, but still I feel as if this is the end of a chapter, of an era. I feel the breeze upon my face and I hope that it will not be the last time I feel its loving caress; I hope that, above all, the Forumites hiding below in their squalor will be able to rise from the bowels of the earth and reclaim this, their homeland. And I am their hope, the last thread hanging in the balance between utter destruction and each Forumite inhaling this scent. A scent of smoke, of death, but carried deep within...life. A fresh breath of spring, a scent of flowers, of hope. I inhale deeply, taking the good with the bad, the bad with the good, and step forward. I am ready. I will do this. No more shall I be a puppet, no more! Let it be known that I am now the author of my own fate...

I walk through the land of Necrothreat for the first time since the sun was obscured by the great Firewall in the reign of Perrin. Still I see its signs...Piles of ashes, blackened trees. But through it all life endures, green poking through the grey, buds in the black. The land calls me forward, the path clear. I fear it is a path to my death, but I walk it gladly. I have reconciled myself to my fate and because of this I have shaken off the snare Armok set upon me on my death and rebirth. He rules through terror, and loses that hold as terror leaves his victim. I no longer feel fear at the name of Armok. He is a cur to me, a destroyer of worlds and also a creator of worlds...Bringer of life, but only for the blood they will bring him. No, I no longer fear Armok. I hate him with a rage which threatens to consume me. But I do not let it...that is the path to Fain, who Highmax names Ur. I will give neither god the satisfaction of having me dancing on their puppet strings.

But Armok is cunning...he shall try to claim me, if he can, for I have spat in his eye by being free from him. As I welcomed the blanket of death he dragged me back, and forced on me my.... I cannot think of it, even now. All I think of when I recall it is blood. He wanted me afraid, and so sent his minion to keep me loyal...his blood sucking minion. I grin, a wicked grin, a free grin. The grin of a man who has met his maker, despises him, and is not afraid to say it to him. He has yet to see the fury of a Forumite who has lost all, who has been tormented and tortured to within an inch of his life. That fury...that fury will make even the gods tremble and rue the day they stirred up its embers, for the fire they sent to me has forged me a-new. They made me what I am. I suppose I should thank them...after I settle my score with them.

I see it. The yak, drenched in blood, gore spattering its blade-like hoofs. It seems to blot out the sun and despite myself I begin to feel fear...but no. I will not be afraid. I walk towards it, smile never leaving my face, barely hesitating at all. It rises in front of me, a hill in its own right. I disobeyed Highmax to come out here. Funny, how that

occurs to me as I look upon my rival. But it does. I wonder why? Perhaps it is that I have denied the overseer? But no, I don't think it is that; I think it is because I want to live, and obeying would mean life. But I couldn't do it anymore. I must break the puppet strings and face the puppeteer. I must, or ruin will fall on us all. I hope the other Forumites will see it that way...

But I digress, my mind fleeing from that which it does not wish to think of. The yak. I am close now. Close enough to see the trampled bodies of my brethren beneath its hoofs. My rage stirs at the sight, but I hold it in, leash it. I am close now to my goal. The yak notices me, insignificant fly that I must seem to be to it. It paws the ground, eager for my blood to stain the horns it tosses back and forth red... Long and sharp are those horns, ebony and curled. They bring to mind images of death, demons, and Armok. I laugh, and the beasts face seems to twist into a rough look of confusion. Then rage takes it again and it seems to grow wilder, the dirt spraying up in the air behind its rotting bulk. Bits of skin like tanned leather flap on its bleached bones in the breeze as it bucks and balks, comes closer and then prances backwards. Taunting me. I dare to come closer to you it seems to say. Your puny spear does not hold any fear for me

I look at my spear. It hangs in my limp hand. The Yak, infuriated by my lack of care, stamps the ground and churns the turf beneath its feet, bodies of the fallen swept around in its anger. The spear...a weapon of death, of blood. Of Armok. I level it at the Yak and it perks up, the remains of its nostrils flaring in eagerness, twin streams of smoke rising past the blood red pools of eyes which glare balefully down at me. A weapon of Armok. Armok's tool.... Yelling, I throw the spear down, throw down my connection to the bloody tools that Armok would ensnare me with. I serve no-one, not Armok, Not Fain. I answer only to myself. The spear hits the ground and rebounds once. Twice. My world seems to shake with each bounce. When it settles I look the yak in its magma-coloured eyes, staring deep into their cherry depths. It flinches, unsettled for the first time. Grinning with wild savagery, I let go of the reins on my angry, wild side. It is a part of me, not Armok, and it so desperately wants out.

Screaming I charge head down at the Yak, arms pumping and lungs burning. I reach the six feet mark. Five feet. Four. Three. Still screaming as loud as possible, I leap at the shell-shocked yak foot first, landing a blow which resounds through my whole body. Bones grate under my foot as I bounce off the thick skull and land heavily in the blood, mud and stones of Necrothreat. I look above me and see that I may have miscalculated. The yak gazes down at me with fire in its eyes which no water would be able to quench. It snorts, a plume of mist rising in the, twining around the Yaks horns and then disappearing into the cold light of day. It also seems completely unfazed by a kick right between the eyes. Tensing, I prepare to dodge away from the inevitable attack.... Quicker than thought, The Yak lunges downwards with its head.

I gaze down at the ebony spear of horn thrust through my leg. Then, for a second its twin furnaces and my eyes meet. Sparks seem to fly in front of me, and I growl deep in my throat. I won't feel the pain. I. Will. Not. The yak gives a jolt which shakes my entire body, then jerks its horn out of my leg. Anger and dizziness making me wild, I

lunge forward and sink my teeth into the matted flesh and stringy fur on the Yak's chest. The Yak screams, a high pitched sound which rents the air, then rises onto its rear legs. I hang there, attached to its chest, swinging wildly. Shocked. I didn't even know Yaks could rear up like that...But then again, this is no ordinary Yak. It falls back to earth with a bone-rattling jerk. It snorts again, and I feel the vibration of it running through my entire body. My teeth are clenched, unable to let go...despite the taste of death and disease filling my mouth, I hang on. Then I get hit. The world seems to shake, my arm to erupt into flaming pain. Screaming defiance, I unlatch my teeth and swing in the air with as much strength as I can muster, with my entire being as I fall towards the welcoming earth. My foot hits off the Yak's leg, the one that had just kicked me, and rebounds...Nothing is working. I almost despair. Almost. This is one task I will see to the end.

I now fight on two fronts. The pain in my leg and arm pounds in tempo with the stamping of the dread Yaks hoofs. I will not succumb! I lay again in the dirt of Necrothreat, and the blood is now not just that of the Yak's previous victims. My blood mixes with the mud of the earth, and a comforting mist cloaks my sight. It is so comforting...Slowly, my eyes drift closed.... I feel numb...Something in me flexes. A... rage. That's it. Rage at all that has happened, at the fate of the fortress, at the inevitability of our demise. My eyes shoot open and I give a strangled yell. I won't give up! To the end.. I will see it to the end! My body trembles, and the veil is lifted from my eyes. I see the steam rising from the death-defying corpse looming above me, I feel the mud squishing below me. I feel life! And I will not give it up to this...this.. cow! I yell right at its face, and it rises above me. Slowly, oh so slowly, it raises a hoof. If animals could smile, it would be doing so now. And it would be a smile twisted into a hatred of all that is alive.

Thunk. I shudder, blood droplets spraying into the air like glittering rubies. I scream defiance. A tooth filled maw fills my vision and then ducks to the side, charcoal horns almost brushing my face on the way past. I lay, weak and unable to move. I defy it by continuing to live. I will not satisfy it by dying. Not yet, anyway.... Flame. A tide of magma, a brand of fire in the dark. Pain. My arm...The pain...Unable to move from below my neck, I turn my head and stare in awe and horror. The demonic head of the Yak is worrying at my arm, razor sharp teeth slicing through flesh like blades through cheese. I don't feel it any more. That should worry me, but it doesn't. I knew what was coming...but still. Seeing my flesh torn apart is not easy. I try to move, to fight. I close my eyes, bring forth the rage, that warmth which lights me up from the inside. My finger twitches, then feeling returns to my unharmed arm in a rush of sensation. Gathering myself, I clench my fist. My lungs rise and fall, bloody spittle flying from my mouth. But I live, I defy. I breathe. With the last of my strength I throw a punch at its craggy head and beady eyes. It meets nothing but air, the power in it barely enough to make it halfway to the Yak. I groan, collapsing back into the torn apart earth.

I feel a tug, one which moves me through the ashes of this bleak land. What is that? I can no longer see the Yak-I fell with my face pointing away from it. Suddenly it looms in front of me, and clenched in its teeth is something pale and mangled...my arm, I realise. It doesn't surprise

me though. How can it? My mind feels like it is swimming in a sea of fog. My life is done. I know it. I sink into oblivion, and welcome it. I did what I could. I did!...Somewhere, I know that the Yak is still toying with me. I feel, as if from a distance, my body being tossed around, flying through the air. But I no longer feel. I have spent my rage. Armok can't touch me, for I have let go of my fear...Fain cannot harm me, for I have relinquished my anger. I am now truly free. Peripherally, I feel my head skid across the ground as the Yak loses interest, but I let go. Finally, I let go. Peace...that magical thing, I feel it now, at the last. My body stops moving, and the Yak stands guard over it as the last spark of light drains out of it. I have let go.....

Light. Bright. Shining. That is what I see. Darkness is forgotten. Fain, Armok...their names have never even been uttered in this place, this haven. The light dims from its bright intensity and I see.... I see paradise. Beaches stretch into the distance, and for the first time in my existence I smell something other than ashes and death. The clean smell of salt covers everything. Smiling, I start to walk forward into my new home, my reward for my work, my sacrifice. Out of the haze in front of me rises idyllic islands and lush, forested hillsides. I can finally rest...

The ground trembles. A hand thrusts through the dry sand in front of me. Startled I jump back, hand going for the spear I no longer have. An arm follows. A shoulder. A head, covered in the enchanted sand of this place. All in a rush, Highmax leaps from his hole in the ground. "Quick, Dwarfy. This land cannot hold the presence of one of the living long. Quick!" He holds out a hand, and I look at it. The sky above seems to flicker from its deep shade of blue, the islands in the distance seem blurred. His hand is an offer of life again. An offer of pain. Who knows if I can get back here. I prepare to tell Highmax no, that I am finally happy. I take his hand. Necrothreat needs me, and I will return. I will live again!

Everything goes black.

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### Comment of Th4DwArfY1, User

So, let me get this straight. I have been the play-thing of gods and their vampire servants, I have led the unwashed masses into a new age of splendour and military accomplishment. I have died, and risen again. The power of flame and sword, of divine wrath itself, was not enough to stop me. I have battled zombies, had their grasping hands inches from my neck and still come out on top. My influence helped to purge the spirits of the undead from the halls of the fortress and returned a fellow being back into the halls of life. *I spat in the eye of Armok himself!*

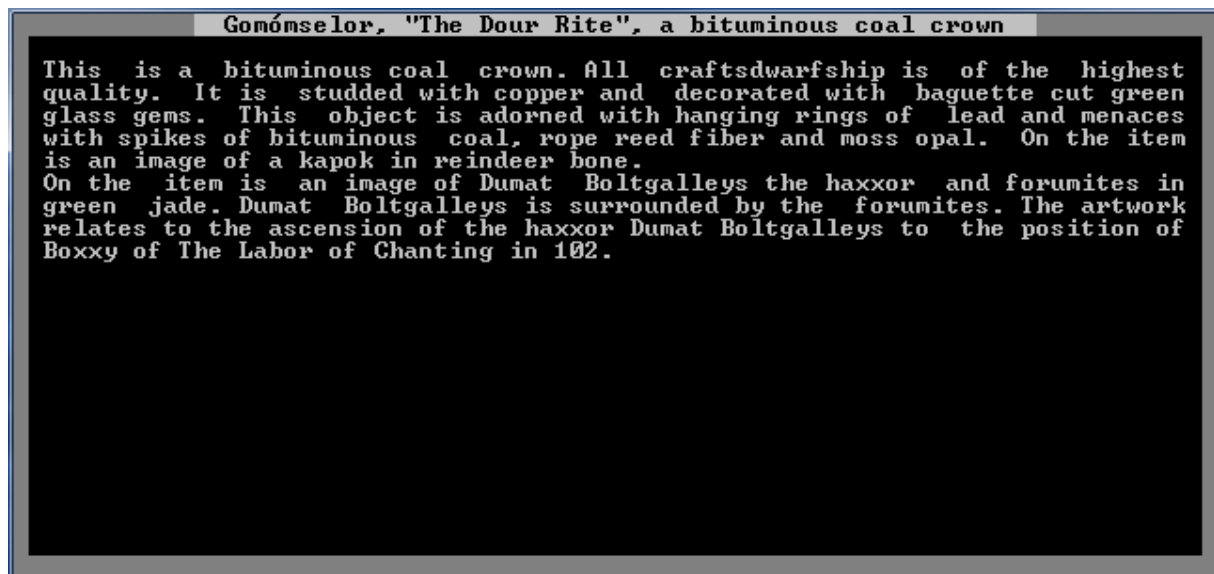
All that, I have done. I have seen the rise and fall of many suns and moons, the turning of the world and one season blending into another in a dizzying blend. And it all ends in a muddy field with a bloody *yak* goring me. In true Necrothreat spirit, what a Troll.

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## 11th of Timber, 258: Child Prodigy and Mourning

Timeless Bob just made a crown of coal... Odd.



Maybe we'll have a king wear it someday? Many are still mourning over DwArfY's death. Only I was the one to witness it, but it was disheartening. He ruled us for a time. He freed me from undeath, and I can never thank him enough for that. Even if the mental battle went on in my head, I couldn't have won if it wasn't for DwArfY defeating my body as a thread zombie. He had a different name for Ur, from what I remember him saying, but then again, he wasn't from the old home. He was from this world, not that horrible old world where many of us came from. And then it got me remembering so much... Of InsanityIncarnate, Misko, Splint, Jenny, Sprin, BFEL, Mastahcheese... Only Apiks, myself and NAV remain of those from the old homes. I sat up on the catapult battery and watched that damned Yak guard that area as if it was his territory, every now and then trampling on the bodies of the maiden, the stone dog and even DwArfY. No... This cannot be how it ends for us all... To be amongst the dead, tossed about like trash... I let out a cry of war, screaming out to Armok and Ur, damning them and all gods for forsaking us all. It won't end this way... I won't let them suffer the curse of Undeath as I did. There has to be another way. I'll use that magic if I have to in order to keep us all alive, but it won't be enough to stop a war of the gods. I'll condemn myself to years in that hell of undeath if I have to so that everyone can be free of it. I want everyone to embrace the stillness of death when they die. Not the horrors I had to face.

LATER:

I'm gonna do it... I'm going to bring DwArfY one back to life... I don't care if I die in the process. I'll let the gods and demons destroy my body and soul for this, but it must be done. We NEED that one warrior of body and spirit back with us. I'm defying Armok by doing this, and we defy Ur with our existence... Does that mean all gods have deserted me? Am I doomed to face the rest of the trials in life and death without gods guiding me? No... I'll find new gods... Ones that will protect us... Ones that will shield us from Armok and Ur's war. One that will give us sanctuary from the hordes of the dead. I'll scour the world if I have to but I won't search today... No, today I bring back the one person I owe a debt to... Perhaps this will make us even? No... I can never do enough to help DwArfY... I'm taking him from Valhalla and returning him to hell on earth. He's not going to be happy, but it must be done...

#### MUCH LATER:

It's done... DwArfY lives yet again... I brought his soul and it claimed a dead body in our coffin rooms, and the magic returned his features and flesh... He claims he remembers nothing at all, which can be a good thing or bad thing. I heard the tale of how all the gods wept for this one man, and his brother descends into hell to return him. Only that the keeper of the dead would only allow it if all wept for him, living and dead. His brother tried hard to convince everyone to weep for him and he failed because of an enemy of his people. Unlike him, I brought back Armok's Chosen and all rejoiced. But I took him from his paradise, not from his torture... Am I wrong for doing this? Am I now trying to play god? How will Armok deal with one taken away from him? Will he claim me instead and damn me? Nothing matters now... Only victory at any price...

#### 12th of Timber, 258: They Return...

We took a quick look at the caverns at a safe distance today. Blood seems to coat the halls, and something, an ancient evil most vile, has shown itself again...

The haxxor thread necromancer's laugh bellowed through the depths and laughed at us through the walls we put up...

And that's not all, his allies arrive on the surface and reanimated all the dead covering the northern fields... Its time! The ballista battery will be used! I'm glad we went inside fast enough, I doubt we could deal with another siege of the dead legions and the haxxor thread necromancer himself. I swear, the laugh is so familiar... I cannot put my finger on it... Then I heard the voices again in my head, and they laughed as well...

They were the laughs combined of the human sealed away and the haxxor as one... Ur himself laughed at me... AT ME! I'll show them... EVERYONE! FIRE THE BALLISTAE AT WILL!

#### 14th of Timber, 258: The Dreaded War Begins

Silence fell over the halls as we prepared ourselves. This is one day we must fight the enemy the best we can. Warriors prepare in case the enemy gets in. We have no skill, but we're strong together. More were drafted to make up for the fallen numbers. Siege engineers begin to man their stations, only to find more dead surrounding them and flee. The roof collapses at the gate and the bridge is lowered, letting in heads and hands. Gaul, alone, single-handedly battles them and defeats them all by luring them to the traps with his cunning. Gaul finds a ranger being attacked by goblin limbs and proceeds to kill them with the maiden leader at his side. Limbs and more body parts rise in the depths, scratching at our walls and are killed by the fiends in the depths. Even they hate the dead as much as we do. The dead increase in number as they infight amongst themselves, spewing limbs and teeth across the fields. The siege engineers are spineless and cannot fire; bastards! Unfortunate Dwarven merchants flee from the armies of the damned only to find themselves trapped. They flee and escape death for today. MMO Gamerz arrive on the fields of war and begin to fight the dead as well. Are none spared in this conflict? Elder Trolls join them in combat as well, fighting the dead. Lightning flies across the sky as rain falls down on us and the fields. We cannot fight them... Not here... Not like This... I call a retreat into the fortress as the other races battle. The depths continue to claw at the walls but cannot get in. More dead drop in from the ceiling of the gatehouse. Whose idea was to have a roof WITH HOLES in it!? The ranger joins in on the battle, firing bolt after bolt. The war dogs I've been secretly have trained unleash hell. A lone RTS gamer arrives battling a horde of the dead. I make a call to fall back, but it took time. We barricaded the doors and locked them. Elephant Parade and the Woody are trapped at the ballista and catapult batteries and are too afraid to get down. I'm going to lock the hatches soon.

((song changed here btw. Can you tell?))

Fingers, teeth and other limbs coat the fields now. A Necrothreader's dream. If the gates ever open, it will spell doom... More fighting in the depths, but we can't tell WHAT or WHERE they're fighting. I cannot describe any better how the rest of the fighting went on, for they still battle amongst each other and we're safe in our halls of stone. The bitter war is over for now... I can only pray that it's done and over with for a long time... We're not prepared to battle the legions of the dead yet... Not even next year will we be ready. We need to improve ourselves so we can defeat the now endless ranks of the dead. And to my horror, the corpse of DwArfY rises... I cry... I cry not because of sadness of the desecration of his body, but because DwArfY is here, spared from the curse of Undeath. I wish I could save the maiden and Stone Dog from it as I did DwArfY, but I cannot... I tried and failed, though too late... Their souls are amongst the damned... The Yak was slain by DwArfY's corpse though... A fitting end to the beast... We're trapped now... And I don't think we'll ever make it out alive...

7th of Moonstone, 258: Winter Brings the Horrors to Life...

We hear sounds in the depths again. It's not the zombies this time:

The Forgotten Beast Smoxut Omospustol Zastrur Uspen has come! A towering quadruped composed of mud. It has four short horns and it has a gaunt appearance. Beware its deadly dust!

Press **Enter** to close window

Oh boy... Other than that though, it's been quiet... Eerily quiet...

#### 20th of Moonstone, 258: Migrants?

Our sentry saw migrants arriving. How crazy ARE these people!? I have to find them a safe place to hide from the hordes for a time... But where? And how fast can we rescue them without killing ourselves?

#### 27th of Moonstone, 258: Success!

Well, we got all the migrants in. We dug an emergency tunnel and had everyone get inside as quick as they can. We soldiers were locked up in a room though to stop "zealous revenge"... Ah well, we got more migrants and that's all that matter.

#### 5th of Opal, 258: More Horrors from the Depths

Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse;

The Forgotten Beast Thol has come! A gigantic feathered spider. It has an enormous shell and it has a bloated body. Its lime feathers are long and broad. Beware its poisonous bite!

Press **Enter** to close window

At least we're safe right? ...Right?

#### 20th of Opal, 258: Trade?

Remember those migrants I told you about? Well, one of them ISN'T I migrant; he's the outpost liaison. He still thinks elephant parade is the overseer, so he's getting a good yelling right now. I peeked in on the conversation a bit and discovered that they were dealing with some trade. I altered it a bit to ask for swords. A LOT of swords... And steel anvils for melting along with some metal bars. Know what elephant parade

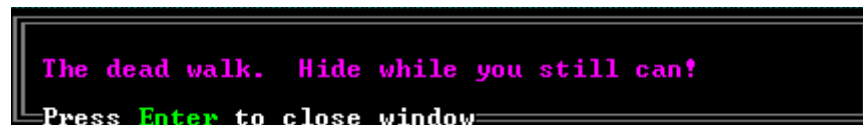
wanted? Cloth... Silk cloth... Really? We need clothes, yeah, but not enough to want it THAT badly!

LATER:

They want... Armor? And Cheese? really? Ah well... I hope he can find his own way out of here...

### 17th of Obsidian, 258: The Army of the Damned

The watch just ran and told me the dead begin to march a vast army against us, led by more Necrothreaders.



We won't fight this time. This time, we hide. Just as before... We will protect ourselves from the outside world and await the coming storm... We will fight when we are ready... But that is not today...

The voices are becoming unbearable now... It seemed to grow stronger since I brought back DwArfY... It's a different voice now, not like before... Perhaps Armok is trying to do the same as Ur and his minions have done? If this keeps up I'm surely going to go insane like that vampire... He's still thrashing about, trying to break free. I don't dare throw over a weapon in fear of him using it back at me. Before he was docile, now he's berserk and insane.

Reports are disturbing... They say that the High Lord Threadromancers are returning... What madness is this!? Just then, I knew we cannot win this if they breach us... I went to the roof and I let out that warshout to the skies, damning the gods, damning the undead, and damning the old homes and the demons that roam there. My mind was just so clear now, and all I could feel was nothing but anger and rage. The dead watched me as I stood there. Then, something flew up and greeted me. Indeed, they have returned.

"Greetings, mortal wretch. I am the commander of this legion of the dead. You are their general or a captain at least. The Dark One gives his regards and his anger. Your people have been a thorn in our side for some time. You will fall before the year is done. I give you the chance to join us. And not as a pawn, but as a High Lord Threadromancer like myself. You already possess the ability to use magic as we do. It's all a matter of controlling it. We can help with that. Renounce your god Armok and join us amongst the armies of the Dark One. What say you?"

I stood there, facing his hooded body. I knew my choice was clear...

"I... I renounce Armok..."

"And?"

I grabbed him and stabbed him with my sword through his heart.

"And I renounce your gods as well..."

I threw him and then my rage became so overwhelming I couldn't control it. I could only see hate and fire and destruction. I let out a roar of pain and I felt something leave my body. Heat covered me as it left, but I fell to my knees, almost exhausted. I watched as the energy, in the form of a red beam shot straight up and over the fields, slamming down and unleashing a great inferno. More High Lord Threadromancers arrived and were burnt upon entering. Nothing by the inferno survived, living or undead. Suddenly, armies of the elder trolls arrived and began to fight along our side but still appearing aggressive to us. More flames scorched from the blast of the inferno. more dead arrived to reinforce the defeated undead. The flames spread quickly, enveloping all in its caress. Those touched by it would be blessed with being free of undeath. Suddenly, I felt something come over me, and then I felt a conscience that was not my own. Then, I saw a Threadromancer, and drove all my thoughts to attack it. The entire legion to the south began to attack their master. I was one with the magic now. I felt the power rush through me, and everything began to go awry with their plans. Hundreds upon hundreds of dead were rising now, and the Threadromancers gave it their all. I focused all of my power and energy to cause dissension amongst them so they would turn and fight each other. It worked but then I felt the magic course too much through me and I felt something get torn from my body, like something ripped something out of my chest. Flames covered the field now, and I fell unconscious, I heard only the madness of the voices and the dark void that was my mind... If I'm dead, let me stay this way... If I live, then let me awake when all is well...

### 1st of Felsite, 259: Awakening

I don't remember what happened, but this book explains it all. My name is Highmax, I am a Swords Enthusiast. I don't remember anything but my name, this book, and what happens next... I pray to find the answers soon... I'm apparently a leader, but that's strange...I don't know anything about leading... It's really hard to take this all in... Perhaps other books around here can assist me in remembering everything?



## Chapter XI

### The Rule of Th4DwArfY1, the Abomination

#### 1st Granite

**Uzol Kolgídhur, Dwarven Baby has bled to death.**

She is unbelievably strong, almost never sick, quite durable, quite quick to heal, agile and slow to tire.  
'Sulin' Katcerol likes bismuthinite, steel, morion, giant cave swallow leather, spears, crutches, llamas for their long necks and pig tails for their twisting stalks. When possible, she prefers to consume fisher berries and prickly berry wine. She absolutely detests moon snails.  
She has a great kinesthetic sense, a lot of willpower, a great feel for the surrounding space, a sum of patience and good creativity, but she has poor focus, a little difficulty with words and very bad analytical abilities.

I called for the advance; I must then pay for the pain caused. But still, a babe...Well, it is but one more burden I must bear in this, my battle against the gods themselves. Fain's minions had infiltrated the fortress, and we had to throw them out again with blades and steel. Sulin should have known not to bring her child into a fight...Curse the Aiel and their stubbornness! She brought it to the gates to fight the zombified limbs which had over taken the entrance. With her help we drove them back, but lost her child. This is but one more thing for me to carry, one more thing to grind me into the dirt. When I close my eyes I can almost see the shimmering isles of what, for lack of a better word to describe an absence of Fain and Armok, I have called the Light. Almost, I feel the breeze tinged with salt ruffling my beard...And then I open my eyes and see the walls stained with soot and blood. Oh well. I must make Necrothreat that paradise. I must. I will. Why does it feel like such a big task?

#### 2nd Granite-Near midnight

As night falls a deeper shadow moves amongst the bones and grime of Necrothreat's gardens. An evil intent gathers itself, pushing forward. Trying.... trying to take form. A whirlwind of fallen leaves and blood-soaked soil is tossed about in its inky depths. One more push...one more. There. A shape forms, using the night to take the appearance of being, using the wind to move. It feeds on hate and anger, and it has found a feast here. With a baring of sharp teeth, the thing finds what its hollowed eyes were looking for. A corpse lays nearby, shrouded in the darkness. Moving on through the blackness of night, it sees the decapitated head and its gruesome smile gets wider. Perfect. Without a sound, it fills every nuance, every space inside it. Shuddering, the head rises and opens its eyes. Ur has returned to Necrothreat in his truest form, the skull of dread!

Opening his new-found mouth he prepares to speak, to issue his proclamation, his denouncement of doom. To tell all who hear his fell voice on the wind that their end is nigh, that they should flee and cower, for their death has arrived. The harbinger of

death, Ur, has come forth from his long sleep and is ready to devour another Necrothreat. A low growl comes from his mouth, and then trails off into a gasping wheeze. Ur's eyes widen in shock, and he tries again to proclaim his arrival, but with the same results.

He glides silently over to a stagnant pool choked with weeds and debris. Looking in he sees nothing but a vague silhouette, but then as the harvest moon breaks through the roiling clouds above he sees-A snout, floppy ears, a lolling, slobbering tongue. The great, the terrible, the mighty Ur roared and howled at the sky in anguish and hatred. A dog. He had taken a dog's head. In Necrothreat Forumites turned in their beds, and those still awake turned to their mugs of ale and tried to drown out the noise and warm their chilled blood. They thought they were safe. They thought their walls would hold against anything. It is good that they need never know how wrong they are....

Ur turned from the pool in disgust, unable now to change his form. He had spent too much energy coming, he needed to feed, to create anger and hatred to gorge on in order to change form. Drawing his gums back to show canine teeth, he looks towards Necrothreat. Towards his lunch... The head controls the winds, tells them to buffet and lead him to the gates. He passes hills of dead, beasts of the ancient darkness now lying in pools of their own blood, eyes lifeless. Beings that breathed even before the world was shaped in fire and ice now lay prostate, breath and life hacked from them by Necrothreat. Ur admires the way the bodies all seemed to be cut up so finely, how some of those bits still even move. He feels at home, the one place where death could look like an art form. It is with these thoughts that he passes an unassuming body laying with dismembered head some feet from it....

Light. Warmth. A fire in full blaze, forests bathed in the light of the rising sun. Shadows banished by flame, thought kindled by evil presence. A consciousness appeared from its deep slumber, awoken by the dark. What was its name? It could not remember. What was its purpose? That...that it could remember; To defend Necrothreat from any harm. Light suffusing its entire body, the head rights itself and rises from the ground. It barely makes a noise, and it is covered in congealed gore, stained darkly red.

Its name...what is it? It shouldn't be important, but it is...What is its name! Slowly, it pieces together disjointed memories of a previous existence...Caring for the wounded, helping the sick, comforting the mourning. Being there for people in times of need, times of grief. A face swims in its inner vision, flaxen hair shining in the lamplight inside Necrothreat's walls. She remembers. Her name...her name is Jenny, and she will protect Necrothreat, protect her friends, her family.... Sprin, her caring master, mad genius that he was. She will protect them.

Within, from a heart no longer connected to her, she feels the rage of her people, a rising tide of hate and anger...all directed at one being, Ur. Too long...too long have they lived in fear. As like the blood of the earth, their ire rises in her with the force of

the magma her ancestors first uncovered. She burns with it...filled to bursting with it...explodes with it. A pillar of white rises in the air, shooting from the now pearly brilliant skull. She will defend. Her people will fight back this night against the scourge of their ancestors!

Illuminated for the first time by this brilliant blast is the cur, Ur. She sees him, and he sees her. They face each other across a field torn and sundered by war. He drags on the last power remaining to him, the power of hate and anger, betrayal and envy. He sucks it in, and forces it to form around him, to shoot into the sky in a spear of purest evil, darkest blackness. In the sky two pillars face each other, strength against strength, life against death. Hound and human prepare, and then pounce...

```
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head shudders and begins to move!  
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head attacks The dog head but He scrambles  
away!  
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head pushes The dog head in the head, but the  
attack passes right through!  
The dog head pushes The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head in the head, but the  
attack passes right through!  
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head pushes The dog head in the throat, but the  
attack passes right through!  
The dog head pushes The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head in the head, but the  
attack passes right through!  
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head pushes The dog head in the head, but the  
attack passes right through!  
The dog head attacks The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head but She rolls away!  
The dog head attacks The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head but She scrambles  
away!  
The 'Jenny' Libashkodor's head pushes The dog head in the head, but the  
attack passes right through!
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## Sprin's Loss

Sprin awoke in a strange room soaked in blood. A site Sprin saw more times than any soul should see, but Sprin felt more at home in this setting. He pledged himself to the medical field, he found the forumite body fascinating. How resilient it was to torment and how fragile it was to death.

Now was not the time to admire his surroundings. He remembered being attacked by a strange Forumite. He seemed familiar but he couldn't think his name. WHO WAS HE!? Soon Sprin's question was answered as the HE stepped from the shadows. "Who are you?" Sprin demanded "Why should I not dismember you?"

"Hahaha!" He laughed "I'm not important, what matters now is closer."

"Closer?"

"Yes Sprin, you forgot about someone when you fled Necrothreat. Can you guess who?"

Sprin pondered the question, and his blood drained from his face. Jenny! He told her to flee this place, was she still there?

"Good luck Sprin." He said and disappeared in the shadows.

Sprin ran out the blood soaked room and stumbled into his clinic. He was in Necrothreat again, that horrible place where people die and kill their family.

Sprin had to find Jenny and flee Necrothreat for her safety.

"JENNY! JENNY! WHERE ARE YOU!" Sprin cried.

Long ago before Necrothreat was founded Sprin and Jenny worked together at the clinic in the mountain homes. They were close, Jenny loved Sprin but he was too stupid to see it. He spent his time studying anatomy so he could help forumites who got injured. One day Sprin was chosen to head a new clinic in Necrothreat. He felt a strange feeling of deja vu and Jenny came with him. Little did they know the horrors that awaited them. Soon Sprin was forced to leave but Jenny wouldn't go, she couldn't leave people to fend for themselves so they parted ways. Sprin hated his decision to leave her, he lost sleep ate poorly didn't bathe. He became a mess without her.

A forumite laid in a bed on the far side of the clinic.

"You! where is Jenny?" Sprin asked

"Jenny? She died..." said the patient

No... Sprin's fears were realised... Jenny his nurse... Dead...

"WHERE'S THE BURIAL HALL? I MUST SEE HER!" Sprin yelled

"There is no cemetery, her body lays where it died."

After long search Sprin found the corpse fighting a dog's head. "No this can't be." Sprin vowed her sacrifice won't go wasted for he will help the people of Necrothreat tell Jenny's spirit is put to rest.

"Sprin, be strong..." said a voice from the shadows "and remember she is still with you."

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### 3rd Granite

I have a plan. The zombies outside bay for blood, the blood and meat of the living... They are so frantic they pull the rotten flesh and limbs from their own dead to satisfy their needs. But it doesn't, and the ripped limbs rise anew and join them. Ripping, tearing. Feasting. Their howls penetrate the gates and even walls of the fortress. They penetrate my dreams, dreams which had been so blessedly peaceful before they came. But I have a plan. They will see. I will not be tormented, not when paradise was almost in my grasp! I will cleanse Necrothreat of this onslaught of the dead. I will see the fields of the fortress again populated by the living and make Fain rue the day he sent his minions to our land!

But...but first I must ready us. Too long now have we cowered in the depths and allowed our realm to be ruled by foreign forces. Too long have our weapons only pierced flesh in the arena. Too long, much too long. I must create a new squad, one which will defend the troops as they once again wet their blades with blood of the enemy in combat. Going to NAV, the beersmith in our fort, I ask him to become the leader of a group of crossbow wielding maniacs who will no doubt be in the thick of the battle, shedding blood, taking hits. I explain the honour of the position, the power to be had from it. I also explain the death rate of the military, how mutiny is common, how he will have to carry the dead of his squad back on his own shoulders. And then, I drop the worst news of all on him. I tell him of the scarcity of food, the restricted rations....and also the lack of booze. He looks at his flagon of ale. He looks at me, drunken befuddlement writ large on his face. A dim understanding dawns on him, and he looks down and then back to me again. He sputters and starts to shake, lips twisting. I am tempted to back away, for he looks like a volcano with red cheeks flaring. From his writhing lips come the first words he has said since I came in. "Well bollocks," he whispers and, blood draining from his face, faints in his chair, head lolling backwards and drool dribbling down his chin. The Light save me for doing this, but who better to command them than another lunatic?

#### 4th Granite

I walk far into the bowels of the earth, trying to find Apiks. He is elusive, the creator of the fort. And well he should be, for many look up to him and his presence may be seen as a direct challenge to the Overseer. And yet I now seek for him. It is hard; I myself have only heard whispered tales told around roaring fires as Forumites raise tankards of ale in his honour. They say he shall one day rise from his mines and once again take control of the fort. I wish he would, in some ways...to rule is to be needed, and to be needed is to let people down. Me especially...my previous rule of Necrothreat I was a puppet, a mere tool to be used. I could barely help myself, never-mind everyone from the smallest baby to the mightiest warrior. That is my burden. I must bear it, or be crushed.

I come upon a junction in the mines, the first I have seen. Forumites rush past me in a tide, leaving a gap around me as they travel deeper towards the warm glow of the forges. They fear me. It is not only Apiks who is mentioned in their stories. They say I am a monster, a thing of the shadow. That I have hewn or killed my way to the top, that my rule is drenched in blood. They say I am a servant of ancient and fell powers; that I cannot look at sunlight without being burned. They say that I am not fit to rule. They respect Apiks. They fear me. I will show them that I am not evil, but it will take time. I will earn their respect eventually.

I turn down the dust-covered never-used path, for anyone who doesn't want to be found goes to the deepest and least trodden area of the fortress. I follow it through many twists and turns, down towards the deep magma sea. Soon the rocks become hot to touch and gold spiders through the rock. As I travel I listen to my heart beat, a reassuring tempo which lulls me into a sort of trance. I walk to the sound of it, drifting in and out of reality and thought. Beat! Beat! Beat! I round a corner and I hear the scuff of boots on stone. Suddenly the beat stops and, startled, I open my eyes to find

that I had been walking aimlessly through a maze of tunnels towards the pounding of what I had thought to be my heart. It hadn't been, as I could now see.

Apiks, converser to Gods, seer of the future and light of ancient days when Necrothreat was but fire and grim shadows flung far and wide. When first a Forumite came to these halls, Apiks was there already. And now he stands before me, dressed in simple clothes of simple make, with no decoration and a pick in his hand. I shrug in my elaborately embroidered robes of office, ashamed to show them here in this place of practicality.

I have stood under the blows of gods and never truly worshipped or admired them. Their hands have been on my body and mind, allowing me no reprieve awake or asleep, but I didn't break. I stayed straight, unbent. I kept my honour. But before this man I am as close as I have ever been to kneeling in the stones and mud, fancy clothes or no fancy clothes. He smiled faintly as if he understood what I was thinking then wiped the sweat from his brow. "You wish to speak to me?" he said in a gravelly voice. We speak long on matters small and big, and I explain the situation outside. I then lay down my plan. Nodding, he hefts his pick and starts grimly down his path, the path I now realise he made with his own hands. I follow, awed. Surely the gods cannot win as long as we have this man? With Forumites such as these, the gods would best be worried.

Apiks comes to the place I had told him of and he nods, eyes intent on the rock. He lifts his pick, and it seems imbued with the power of the ancients. Muscles like cord straining in his arms, he raises his pick and sinks it deep into the skin of the earth. The first part of my plan is in action. I smile and walk away, the sounds of Apiks piercing stone and soil fading behind me.



### 7th Granite

I stand at the battlements looking out at a scene from my darkest nightmares. The odd twisted and charred tree rises from the ashes strewn on the ground, and bones poke through the grime and dirt. And the corpses...the corpses stand and stare back. They no longer howl or moan, they don't make a noise. The wind whistles past them, but they just stand and stare. Watching me. Shuddering, I turn away from their silent vigil and go back down the ladder and into the fortress. The moment my foot touches

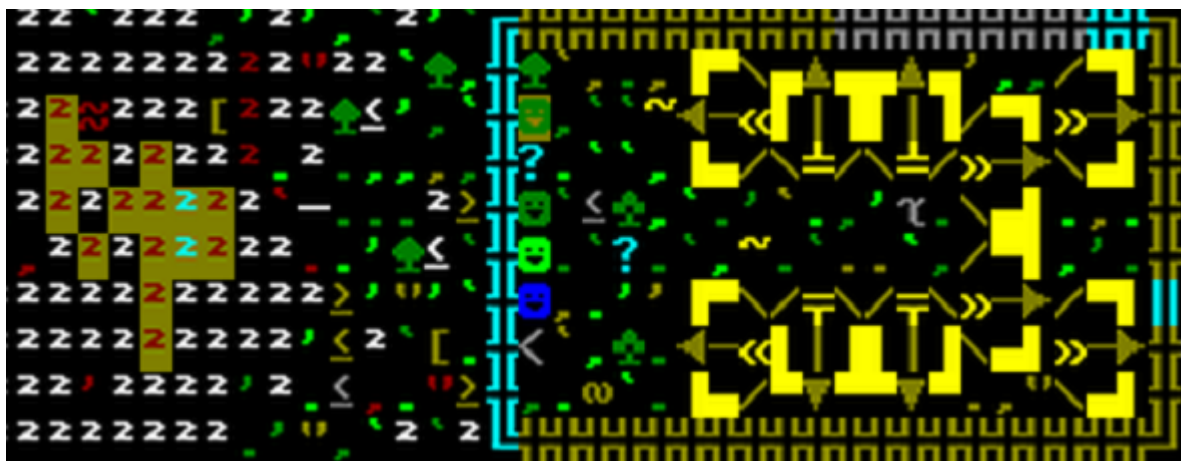


the ground a howl rises from one, and then a shriek from another. Soon the noise cuts through the entire fortress again. They do that every-time I leave their sight. I remember many sieges, many hordes pitched against us by the cruel god Fain.... but this, this is the worst. No siege has ever lasted this long, no siege has ever just stood there...waiting. I can almost feel their hunger for my flesh, feel their teeth sinking in.... No! I will not let them. Fain will not have me.

I stalk through the halls, not seeing the walls or even thinking of where I am going. What will I do? Those zombies were obviously sent to destroy me, to wait until we snap and attack them. I stick out my hand and grab a passing boy by the shoulder as he jogs past. He looks at me and his eyes widen. "Y.. Y. Yes, S...Sir?" Why is he so scared? I don't have time to think on such small matters.

"Boy, I want you to do something for me" I say, staring into his eyes. I try to give him a reassuring smile. If anything he looks even more terrified. Foolish boy! When will these people start believing that I'm not an undead abomination? "I want you to tell NAV that he is to pepper those husks above ground with bolts. Tell him to leave none standing. Okay?"

"Yes sir, right away!" He said. Standing upright, he gives a quick grin and jogs on his way, leaving me dumbfounded. Did I say something that encouraged him? I don't know. Shaking my head, I continue stalking the halls, wondering about Fain, about Armok. Planning, I hope, for when Forumites will once again be free of them both.



Fire like a molten sea with imps of fire and men of flame, demons and horrors. And rising through them all, a fiery hand, a brand of doom with a blackened face made of coal looming behind it. It encloses me, envelops me...The whispers of Armok weave through my mind. The boom of drums echoes as he tells me what I should do, what I have to do. Screaming from pain and anger at being trapped, I jerk upwards and throw a punch at the face hovering in front of me. A child's face gawks down at me. With effort I pull the punch short inches from his bulbous nose. My legs are trapped, so I reach over and light the lamp beside me. The light shows the bedroom and my

body wrapped in sweat-drenched bed clothes. My shuddering breaths even out and I collapse backwards into my pillows. Another dream. Just another dream. That's what I tell myself every time but...I only ever had that type of nightmare when Armok was controlling me. Could I still be under his thumb and not know it?

Once I have recovered I focus my eyes back on the messenger child, the same as before. He again looks at me with fear in his eyes. I sit back up. "M...m..my lord. I ha..a.. ave a messa..ge for y...y.. you" He stammers, eyes not looking up from the stoney floor. He seems to relax himself, and his back straightens like the steel our smiths are renowned for. I smile to myself - this child is a brave one indeed to recover so quickly after nearly being attacked by the "Undead abomination of Necrothreat". He again opens his mouth "The zombies aren't falling sir, not like you asked NAV to make them. They seem to fall...and then the men say they feel some dark force at work and they rise again, bringing with them any limbs torn off." He stops speaking and looks back at the cracks in the ground as if he could hide in them.

So...Fain's foul magic is here as well. It strikes me as weird that I hear this news just as I have my nightmare...but surely it is a coincidence. My dreams are just dreams; I am still safe. But what am I to do now though? The dead are not going back to their graves. "Is there no good news" I mutter to myself. Nevertheless, the messenger answers.

"Yes sir. The men grow better at the crossbow. I have been told by Crossbow Commander NAV to tell you that two show real promise." He edges closer to me and hands me a slip of paper.

**'Rhunorah' Amavuz has become a Elite Marksdwarf.**

**'Mastahcheese Returns' Shiniden has become a Elite Marksdwarf.**

"What's your name boy?" The child looks up, a small grin taking shape on his lips. His fear seems to be mostly forgotten.

"Bob, my lord, though everyone calls me Timeless Bob" I nod, taking note of the name. This child has strength.... he will be a fine Forumite. We will have need for strong Forumites before this is all over. I hope to be one of them, that I will not cave under the pressure. Even as I think this I feel a shadow press on my mind, and an echoing chuckle seems to bounce around in my skull. A dream...it was just a dream!

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

A mood has captivated me. I write these words to keep my sanity

Of blood and fear he's creator,  
Of all that's dark and creeps at night;  
Of beasts he is dominator  
And enemy of all that's light

His name, O Armok the Blood god,  
Is fear itself, and blight upon  
The fool who thinks to control him  
Through happiness and joyful song

But hark! Here comes his ancient foe,  
In bones and leather he is robed  
And all he touches turns to woe  
For death is all he's ever sowed

His names are Fain and Ur the Head  
Of death he's master, dead he calls  
To soldier for him as un-dead  
And tries to pierce our bloody walls

But twixt them both there stands a force  
Of men and workers for the Light  
Who never knew that evil's source  
Lay in the gods they saw as right

In Necrothreat they stand against  
Minions of both Armok and Fain;  
They hold the dead and fiery hands  
Of gods away as their hopes wane

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### 1st Slate

Claws in my head, he's in my head! That voice like an avalanche of ice and stone, it's talking to me, whispering to me...I tremble, strength wavering. The other Forumites in the Dining Hall glance at the shaking Forumite to see if he is okay and, seeing it is me, their eyes slide off. None want to be seen talking to the monster they believe me to be, and I wouldn't be able to hear them anyway. My entire world is consumed by that voice...I sink to the floor, clutching my head and babbling. The dining hall slowly drains of people until I am alone. All alone with Armok prying his way through my skull.

I shout out, a plea for help, begging for the strength to resist. I feel my will slipping, the want to obey getting so strong while I get so weak. I cry out once more as my will crumbles, and suddenly he is there, sword strapped at his side. I lay curled on the floor, cheek pressed against the cold stone, as Highmax hovers above me. He

seems to shine, to emit a light. He starts to mutter to himself, and amongst his words I catch "Mind must be broken...This is going to be difficult" A hand blazing with cool light rests on my forehead, and I gasp. Every fibre in my being shudders and Armok's touch slowly recedes before the tide of light. I sit up, gasping. Red fingers of blood drip down my face from where I dug my nails in, red crescents in my skin standing out in the light.

I look at Highmax in awe, his face now in front of mine. He looks gaunt, and seems to have trouble standing. Blood shot eyes look into my own and the light which shrouded him is no longer visible. "Blood and bloody ashes, but that was hard. Now why did you have to go insane like that? You nearly got me killed! It felt like I was pushing against a wall of icy fire, if that even makes sense...Come on, get up. The overseer can't look like a beggar in the mud" He reaches out a hand and I grasp it, pulling myself up to my unsteady feet.

"How...how did you know to find me?" I gasp as I stagger alongside him out of the Dining Hall. The Forumites walk past in an uninterrupted flow. We are just two more drunken idiots who can barely walk to them.

"Came to give you a message" He grunts, strain making his voice sound strange and gravelly. "More migrants have arrived; they're stuck outside with the undead. They fear for their lives and do not dare approach the gates." He grunts again "The commanders wanted to leave them there, but I have a different idea, if Apiks can be spared from his work on the path?" He trips on a small rock and we both nearly go down. I am so weak, so very weak. My tiredness is almost a physical thing which stops me moving, stops me thinking straight...But I cannot let those migrants die to Fain. I will not admit defeat on this.

**Some migrants have arrived.**

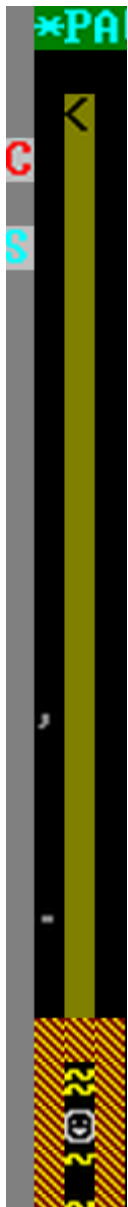
Gathering myself I press Highmax for details. Once he explains what is needed I nod my head with supreme weariness and clasp his shoulder. I try to show my gratitude as I look at him. "Let it be done" He nods sagely, and I walk away with my back straight and head high. If I kept my head high in my search for Perrin, I can do it now. The moment I get into my chambers I collapse onto bed and sink into a deep sleep, dreams haunted with the rotten faces of the dead and their grasping hands. At one point I waken to find myself on the floor, rolling on the rug. I stagger to my feet and fall back to bed. I don't wake up until noon the next day.

### 7th Felsite

Highmax's plan worked. We now have six more Forumites, thank the light! Even now they are working in jobs which had needed more workers. Apiks worked through the night to carve out a new path to the outer edges of the map, and the forces of Fain devoured two valiant Forumites, but the rest survived. They survived, and that brings

me hope that I can survive the minions of Fain too. The mood in the fortress seems light tonight as we greet our new brothers. Even the more resentful don't seem to be glaring as fiercely at me...Maybe I can earn their trust. It is a big maybe, but I live in hope.





### 8th Felsite

The gate of the arena closes shut with a hollow thud behind me. The blood spattered walls of this hole of death seem to loom much higher than they actually are. I steel my heart for what is to come and arrange the men in a line near the hatches. That's where they will come from, the beasts of death and doom. That's where we will teach Armok who the master of Blood is!

We wait for a while, and then the grunts of the haulers reaches us...Soon now, soon. My blood heats up in preparation of the fight, my hand tightening on its sword. No more spears, not for me...I was reborn as a wetlander, and to their traditions I will hold. The spear holding Aiel seem to relax, to get more casual instead of more anxious. I feel like a spring wound tight, wound to the point of breaking. Suddenly, I am released from the strain as a hulking figure is tossed amongst us. The Aiel move as one, stabbing, slashing. Another beast is released among us, and I find myself

face to face with it, its tusks hanging low below its slavering mouth. Its beady eyes watch dumbly as I strike first in its torso, blade like a serpent which spins in the air and bites. I twirl and my sword hacks through its neck and cuts its spine. Its head flies off in an arc to land in a pool of blue blood. Trolls. I grin with a mad glee. They don't stand a chance. We wait for the next volley.

A Forumite is dropped into the pit. The Aiel raise their spears and then lower them, confused. He stands up slowly and twists towards us to show his bony front. Bones...Are they sticking out? "Attack, attack! It is one of the undead!" I scream, desperate. I am too late. As the creature of Fain leaps at me, ignoring the blades ripping through its fetid flesh, it gives a blood curdling scream. I raise my sword...and hit a wall in my mind. I. Can't. Move. With supreme effort, I break through the barrier and my weapon is raised in front of me slowly. Too slowly. Rotten flesh and lank hair slams into me. I feel it gnawing...gnawing at my legs, getting higher. As I sink into darkness, I see a face wreathed in flame waiting for me in that midnight coloured void.

Pain...My legs are made of pain. I throw back my head and scream, tears streaming down my face. Armok is in my head again, twisting, turning in the depths of my thoughts. I will never be rid of him! "You shhhhhouldn't have enjoyed the blood so much, monkey. You opened the way for me to get into your head again...." My mind feels like a smith is using it for an anvil...Letting go, I give into the pain. The other Forumites in the hospital look at me strangely, but I don't care. Armok is in my head again!

**'Th4DwArfY1' Eribbetan, Armok's Chosen is throwing a tantrum!**

### 13th Felsite

I wrestled with the madness in my head for five days, an exhausted Highmax coming in and out of the hospital to work his healing magic. Eventually we pushed him back again...for now. Even now I feel like someone is sitting on my shoulder watching me. Waiting for the chance to strike. Always waiting...This is going to be the death of me-I can feel madness creeping up on me, a dark blanket which threatens to consume me. I can no longer control myself, I feel anger at the smallest things. Timeless Bob came in with a message, and I nearly ordered him executed. Light, what is happening to me? The good will towards me after the migrants were saved is steadily vanishing and many look at me with hatred again. But I can't stop; it's like I'm not in control anymore.

As I muse this over, a tentative knock on the door disturbs me and I fight not to throw



my sword at it. Light, it is so hard! "Come in" I say through clenched teeth. Timeless Bob peeks his head around the frame and, seeing I'm in bed and not standing up, comes in. He has learned that if I am on my feet I am more likely to turn violent. What a harsh lesson to learn for one so young.

"Elves, sir. They've brought a caravan. Apiks wants to know if we should let them in, or what...." He hands me a message

**A elven caravan from Thonothithu has arrived.**

"No! I don't want to take the bloody risk. And for what?" I sneer "A pile of cloth and thread? Let them stay out there, they'll go away sooner or later. Well, what are you waiting for? Go tell him!" He ducks out of the room and leaves me to my internal struggle for sanity. I'm so hungry that my stomach feels like a hole, and so thirsty my throat is like sandpaper. I haven't been fed in so long... The nurses have it in for me, I know it! I must tell Timeless Bob to take a message to Apiks. They must be executed! No... no. They shouldn't, but they should be made to feed me. They must be! Light, I'm so hungry. I lay back in bed and ponder on what I saw, what I think I saw, when Armok let down his guard. Could it have been? But I need more time to think it through. If I am right...well, time will tell.

#### 14th Felsite

I see now...I see. The haze which had covered my mind since the attack on my legs has cleared, and the thing which I had caught a glimpse of in the thoughts of Armok is revealed to me. I have followed the strings of the puppeteer...and now I know where they lead. The lairs of his minions are revealed to me! I sit still in the hospital bed I was dragged to, but now I see beyond its drab walls...my mind follows the strings...follows to a place of black stone and icy glass. I struggle, my body trying to fit through the eye of the needle. Pushing...pushing...There! My body goes from my hospital bed and reappears in that land of glass and stone monoliths. A castle of

deepest black surrounds me. Down the middle of the hall I stand in runs a carpet of deepest red. Blood red. The colours of Armok, black and red. I grin. The secrets of Armok's travel are now mine!

I walk through the halls of Armok's land, looking for something to talk to. Doors of ebony slam open and shut of their own accord. Looking into one of the rooms I see chains of midnight black hanging from an unimaginably high ceiling and, draped on them, the figures of humans and dwarves, elves and kobolds, fighting, pushing...dying. The bones and corpses of the fallen litter the ruby-red ground. Another reveals a pool of tar and screaming faces stretching through it to the low-slung ceiling before the door slams shut with a crash. After that I stop looking and

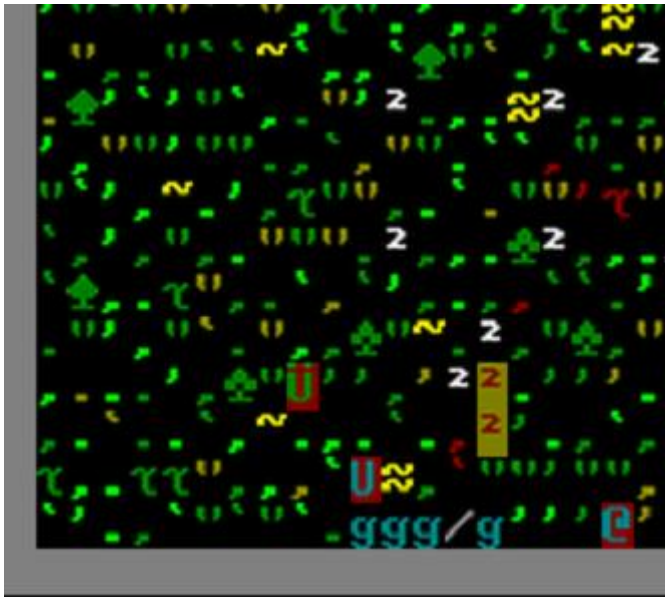
focus on my goal. A door of vermillion stands at the end of the corridor, the ebony doors dwarfed by its immensity.

By the time I reach those doors my back aches and I can no longer feel my legs. A trail of blood from my reopened wounds follows me before it is absorbed by the carpet. I try not to think of it as the castle drinking my blood...I don't think I could stand another servant of Armok... sipping... drinking... Light! The doors loom before me. With one gauntlet clad fist I knock on it, using what strength I have left. No answer. With a grunt, I ram my shoulder against it and shoving, pushing and heaving I force it open to the sound of groaning wood.

I stand now in a hall of midnight. No other splash of colour paints it except black. Rows of wooden pillars stained dark march in rows down the side, standing on floors of black marble. Benches and chairs of the same wood as the pillars sit in silent rows as if waiting. Paying them no heed, I walk in further. On my third step a grinding noise echoes in the chamber and a door opens from the rock. I stare in surprise as a single file of black-and-red robed figures walk in and sit down. A single chair remains at the end and, inching forward, I sit in it. As one they lower their hoods to reveal red, staring eyes set deep in green-skinned gaunt faces. Goblins. Suppressing my disgust, I stand and speak to them, the fools who believe me to be a messenger of Armok. When I am done they nod and stand, shuffling out. I imagine home, follow the puppeteer's strings...squeeze...

### 15th Felsite

Timeless Bob came to me in the night and told me to go to the battlements, there was something I should see. I followed him curiously through the halls and reached the battlements, NAV and the crossbow Forumites proving their worth as they fire bolt after bolt into the assembled horde. On the horizon a cloud of dust could be seen and, at its base, a band of Goblins. I grinned viciously, for they had fallen for it. The fools had sent troops to our aid, at what they thought was the will of Armok!



I watch with glee as the goblins charge in their holy crusade, plunging deep into Fain's forces. The zombies cry out in anger as they recognise minions of Armok, and their grasping hands reach out...and are cut off by goblin blades. They shudder, regain life and rise again, renewing their attack. Slowly, the goblins are beaten back, shouting in a guttural language to a thicket of trees some distance away. Backup arrives, nearly too late.

**An ambush! Curse them!**

three more ambushes, only one has any success. I watch as they slay their foes quicker than they can rise again. Then one has an arm ripped off. It descends into bloody froth after that. No survivors. My plan to rid the surface of the dead has failed, but I have had another idea...one which involves the hot seething cauldron beneath our feet.

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## Highmax Regains His Memory

You can tell me a hundred times what my name is. You can tell me a thousand times even. If I don't have anything to put it to, then you cannot help me by saying so simply "You're Highmax" or "You're Highmax the Swords Enthusiast". The latter tells me a bit more, but it still doesn't say much. I emphasize swords? That doesn't say much at all except I may very well be insane. I read that book more and more often, and it tells me more and more about horrifying stories... And the worst part is it tells me that I lived through every single one of them. I fear I never want to go to the "old

homes" as I must've called it. The place sounds like a horror story in itself. After reading that, I see blood stained pages. They recall a time before time when Armok brought back the world after we failed. Who wrote this part? And how do they know so much? It isn't my hand writing. And how do we have a retelling of the old homes? I have been regularly seeing Sprin who scares me a little bit, now that he's slightly mourning over Jenny's death but taking it out on patients. I swear, some poor sod lost his leg when he had a fit of rage.

The book doesn't match handwriting throughout. Someone wrote the previous parts and I appear to have written some of the events. The handwriting varies though with the old homes, starting with a familiar name, Apiks, and ending with another, NAV... And then the blood stained writing appears after NAV's writings mixed in with what appears to be my own. We lost the fort due to the head of Ur apparently; the resurrected embodiment of the forces of evil in this world if I recall. He is a High Lord Threadromancer, and from what I read, the strongest.

I consulted other books as well, and he was supposedly borne of demon blood mixed with human, giving him great magic. The legend appears to tell us that he was the first Necromancer, but grew too powerful. His demonic ancestors cast him aside during the battle between demons and the forces of Armok, exiling him. He grew malicious and vengeful. Many legends say that Adamantine, the cursed ore, was the blood of Armok that was spilled and used to seal the demons, corrupted by the evil of the demons. This tale says that before the time before time ended Ur ended the war by turning onto the side of Armok and the gods, killing many of his ancestors, his "father" the Lord of Hell was one of many.

Armok could not control him after, and they fought. Armok won, but Ur survived, and was cast into Hell. He made tunnels to allow an escape route, but he failed. He then created a magic that corrupted the very earth, and each tunnel from Hell was coated in it, and before he freed himself, he covered the ore with his corrupted earth. Armok, knowing this would create problems when all the races of the world would awaken and time would begin. He encased the magicked earth with a seal; a magic metal stronger than steel and light as a feather. It began to destroy the earth, but its magic remained, cursing the ores. It was then Ur created a magic that made him immortal even through death, making his power grow even if he was to die. His strength became too great for his body, and he knew he would die soon. When time began, he destroyed entire villages for sport, but killed few, letting his minions do the work. In his time, he learned a foul and deadly magic. He created a race that mocked the dwarves, elves and humans of the world; he created the Thread Zombies. Armok then created another race to battle this horror, the Forumites. They warred for as long as they could remember. It was in the year 53 where the forumite hero, Ilral Inchcrystal, struck him down, and the world thought the demon prince, as he was called, was killed for good.

But for every good in the world, an equal or greater evil must come forth. Ur, in his death, became a god to rival his previous ally, Armok. He fought constantly indirectly with the Blood God, killing many of his armies with a handful of Threadromancers, his

disciples. He received others of his kind, Demonic born High Lord Threadromancers, but all died in the great war against Ur, where the hunt for his generals, the High Lords themselves, began. Many died before he ascended to godhood. He resides in a plane of existence where the dead only live, the land is flesh and the water is blood, the rain is acid and its inhabitants are the souls of the undead. He tortures them constantly, but some areas he reserves for a select few. It was said that if Ur was to be truly destroyed, the world would plunge into chaos without the entity of all that is evil.

That is what I read though, but as I read my journal, Armok is cursing us here. Are we truly condemned? Is this that special plane of Hell made by Ur reserved for us? I shudder as I delve deeper into the abyss that is my mind. I begin to remember more. I remember the old homes and its end. I remember the messenger of Armok, and I remember the Haxxor that drove me to near insanity. And then my second death, and my resurrection as a thread zombie... And now, I read through more blood stained pages that make me wish to close the Journal and never open it again. I suffer much pain, and as I read, every ounce of pain returns a thousandfold, and DwArfY keeps asking if something is wrong as I begin screaming. I read on, and I see my hanging by the hooked spear. Then I see the sword... Wait, do I see it before me now or am I just seeing from memory? I grab it, just as I wrote I did, and more memories return. A blade made of the metal that was corrupted, but pure and untouched by the corrupted earth. He appears before me, myself again. He is dead and I am alive. I ready my blade and we battle. I cannot tell what I am doing anymore, but I cannot tell if I am reading or if I'm fighting. Then as I deliver the killing blow, most of my memory returns.

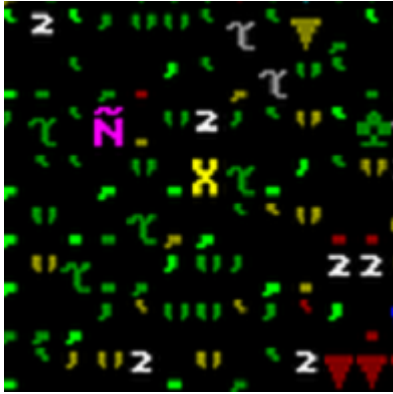
I read through the journal quickly, and I see things about a magical book... Yes... I can control magic. I wield swords. I release fire like a dragon. I feel reborn again for the third time now as I remember everything. I return to a small alcove hidden from the others, and I pull out the book of spells and rituals again. Today, I will study this and learn from it so that one day, I will go to the realm of the dead, and I will kill Ur. I will end the suffering of the souls of the undead, and release them from the tyranny of Ur, God of Undeath and War, the Prince of Demons, Father of Chaos. Then we will be free, and so shall the land. Armok may hate me, but he will make me his chosen when I kill his mortal enemy. I won't stop, even if all of creation is destroyed in the process...

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## 24 Hematite

**►Intruders! Drive them away!**

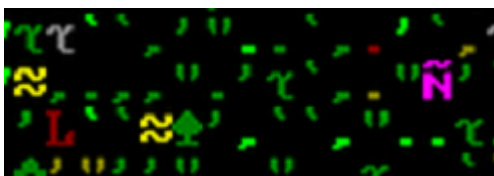
Hark, the scum has been located! Ready the door, lock the vaults-He shall not step foot in our fortress! But where is he, this demon of Ur, minion of Fain-Where is he? The call cries again..” Intruder, drive him away”, wavering in the morning light as it seeps through the fortifications and leaks into Necrothreat. Necrothreader!



Screams of terror, blood curdling noises filled with the sounds of damnation and sorrow, echoed to us. The Necrothreader is scared? What demon of hell could scare such a beast, lord of the dead? None of the ancient texts hoarded by Highmax speak of such terror as is heard coming from the mighty being of death. If we could find what terror has scared it, we could perchance capture it and use it to our own ends.... but first, to find it. I stand in the dining hall of Necrothreat, a bustle of hope as has not graced us for too long surrounding me. I call to messengers..." You, boy! To the fortifications, spy out the beast scaring the monster. You, yes you. To the entrance gate, look through the barricade and say what you see. You, go to...." And so on.

A panting child, clutching a square of parchment, comes barrelling into the room. Face flushed with exertion, he brandishes his prize, proudly holding it up for me. "An artist's representation of the beast, sir!" he gasped between frantic breathes.

"Good, good thank you boy...Bob, is it? Never mind, thank you for the help." I say as I take the parchment. I unfurl it as everyone gathers behind me, eyes wide in morbid curiosity.



A..a...lamb? A baby lamb? That is what the dread Necrothreader is fleeing from, the horror from which the creature that had plagued us through the long months of being trapped was running babbling in terror from? A joke, surely, a joke? But no.... even as I think this a haunting wail rises from outside. A curse on the weak spines of sissy Necrothreaders, I had thought that at last we had found a beast to defend us. Still, the lamb is doing a fine job of herding the Necrothreader off our land. Maybe when it is gone the dead will not rise? One can only hope. This is the first time in months that the feel of evil shrouding my mind seems slightly lessened. We may yet prevail!

## 25th Hematite

### Twenty-Three Notable Kills

Channeledstutters the Nettle of Blood the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Tradeskin the zombie troll, d. 259  
Tradeskin the zombie troll, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Tradeskin the zombie troll, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
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Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Tradeskin the zombie troll, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Skirtedgrieved the Drip-Growth of Conjunctions the zombie human, d. 259  
Trampledcloister the Age of Meals the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Tradeskin the zombie troll, d. 259

Ruhn has a hatred of one zombie, and he takes it out on him with a vengeance. Bolt after bolt, the fateful twang spelling its doom.... until it rises again. It rises quilled with arrows, a porcupine of darts. Ruhn's commitment is remarkable.... but I fear how far he will take it. He has a blood lust in his eyes, one I do not like...It barely dims even when he looks to his comrades. But no. This is Ruhn. I will not fall into suspicion...but still, I will keep an eye on him. Just in case.

But enough of Ruhn, or Rhunorah as he (she) likes to be called now. The Necrothreader has fled, the gates are again open. Stranded migrants pour through, 5, 6...7 in total. We welcome our brethren from the outside with open arms, gape at their open wounds and do our best to help them. They report an indefatigable brother in the field, fighting with wild abandon, the sun glinting on his teeth as he bares them to the sky. They say he fights with his hands, tearing not only limb from limb, but also those limbs into smaller pieces. Asmel, he is known as. Asmel the Vampire. When I hear these rumours of a defending vampire, a hero that doesn't drink Forumite blood, I sneer. No vampire is good ...They're all minions of Armok...Sucking...always sucking.... drinking my blood...Oh, Light!  
But the rumours are wrong. They must be. Besides, they say he can't walk anymore. No being could live out there for this long. Yes, it is a rumour...no Vampire is good!



### Thirty-Four Notable Kills

Bandyawned the zombie human, d. 259  
Warmthsoars the Convent of Matching the zombie human, d. 259  
Lessenedobeyed the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Practicedimplied the zombie human, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259  
Dwellertemple the Pride of Libraries the zombie human, d. 259  
Lureskies the Construct of Guards the zombie human, d. 259  
Dwellertemple the Pride of Libraries the zombie human, d. 259  
Dwellertemple the Pride of Libraries the zombie human, d. 259  
Problemgoals the Tressed Impunity the zombie human, d. 259  
Factionclouds the Play of Speech the zombie haxxor, d. 259  
Whirledtaper the Equal Evisceration the zombie human, d. 259  
Dwellertemple the Pride of Libraries the zombie human, d. 259  
Jailplank the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Bandyawned the zombie human, d. 259  
Practicedimplied the zombie human, d. 259  
Factionclouds the Play of Speech the zombie haxxor, d. 259  
Craftsroughness the Ceiling of Dying the zombie human, d. 259  
Dullmyth the Tarnish of Crucifixion the zombie human, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259  
Amusedslow the Blue Blade the zombie troll, d. 259  
Redthundered the Apogee of Bewilderment the zombie minotaur, d. 259  
Bentchanneled the Hawk of Boulders the zombie troll, d. 259

### Twenty-Eight Other Kills

Two zombie forumites (♀) in Necrothreat  
Three zombie dogs (♀) in Necrothreat  
Six zombie alpacas (♀) in Necrothreat  
One zombie troll (♀) in Necrothreat  
Thirteen zombie RPG gamers (♂) in Necrothreat  
Two zombie forumites (♂) in Necrothreat  
One zombie human (♀) in Necrothreat

Asmel, Vampire defender of the halls, indeed! A myth, he is a myth.

To check whether or not the departure of the Necrothreader would keep the dead dead, Highmax and Sulin volunteered to embark on a voyage of revenge. For the fallen, they lifter their weapons and set out. Never has the fortress seen such bravery. They started in a walk, then a jog. By the end, they were running and brandishing their weapons, screaming insults and death threats to the assembled horde. Highmax swords glimmered red like blood in the setting sun, and quick were his strikes and defences. Though we derided his love of swords, I see now. It is a thing of beauty, the swing of sword, strength warring against strength...a dance of steel with sweat dripping to the ground, the game of life. Alas, the Necrothreader had comrades, and those struck down quickly rose again. Damn the dead, Damn the Necrothreaders!

Their spears and swords rise and fall, hacking and hewing, their force of two faced with ten times their number. The crowd watching at the gates bulges forwards, then bursts, the grim faced marksforumites marching through. NAV strides with determination on his face. He knows he marches to death, he and his men know. He marches on, face of steel gazing forward, laptop in his hand. He will make up for the fall of Necrothreat one, the zombies will taste the bolts of Forumites once more, and their wails will be music to his ears. The one-time-brewer splits a smile as he walks, his mind on the pain he will wreak upon them.

And me. I stand in the shade and look out at the field. Though no Forumites are dead yet, the sheer numbers of zombies make it almost certain. I stand with a deep well of sadness rising in me. Is this the end of NAV, of Sulin and of Highmax? What will the fortress be like without these pillars of strength? I don't want to think of it. I gaze out onto the battlefield, but something keeps niggling in the back of my mind. A slinking shadow rises from the earth nearly in front of me, but my eyes slip from it. I saw something didn't I? What was it...I.. I can't remember. Was I thinking of something? I look back at the battlefield and shake away the feeling of worry that had descended on me. At the moment, a strangled yell came from the trap area, and in a cage nearly at the door to the fortress stood another Necrothreader, who stood in his cage gaping in shock. Another Necrothreader down!

**Intruders! Drive them away!**

### 5th Malachite

Many days they have fought, and I, unskilled in warfare as I am, have watched, eyes straining to find Necrothreaders hidden, their forms cloaked in a mist which my eyes can't see through. How many there are, none know. But we have chased or captured two, and we can do more. We must, the entire fortress depends on it. I watch as Rhunorah and Mastahcheese Returns throw a zombie into the water, working side by side to bash it to a watery grave. It stays dead, the water taking it. That is the only way to rid us of them, force them to the water and kill them, where no Necrothreader can see them. But alas, it may not be enough. Already we have lost two.... Highmax has become a swords enthusiast in more than name, his skill with the sword rivalling his past skill with the spear. Where he strikes, death follows, however temporary.

But there are two who merely look at the zombies and they quake, the dead showing a spark of life in the fear they show. I even pity them, for these two hard-faced women are more than the equal of ten men each, their spears darting and weaving through their foul flesh. Solon and Sulin show Highmax the error of his ways each time they swing their spears. One is silent, Solon, and works as a butcher works, no compassion on her face, while the other shouts bloody murder, screams and rants,

her ire more terrible to look upon than the maggot-filled eyes of Fain's forces. Blood sprays before them. Occasionally Gaul joins them, his skill in the spear their equal and they dance as if at a ball, brothers and sisters of the spear.  
The kills of Sulin mount,

#### Forty-Two Notable Kills

Usu Phantomurn the forgotten beast, d. 257  
Litast Showereddoors the troll, d. 257  
Chaosforded the zombie RPG gamer, d. 259  
Zas Dashslid the troll, d. 259  
Ast Fondledflights the troll, d. 259  
Sarvesh Scorngeenius the troll, d. 259  
Udib Ferryknitted the troll, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lonesomesquare the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
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Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259

#### The Kills of 'Sulin' Ratcerol Rebul Tabar

Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
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Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259

#### Thirty-Eight Other Kills

Thirty-three zombie forumites (♂) in Necrothreat  
Four zombie RPG gamers (♂) in Necrothreat  
One zombie troll (♂) in Necrothreat



But by far is Solon the more experienced.

#### Sixteen Notable Kills

Sweetnessstands the Climactic Taker the zombie giant, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lonesomesquare the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
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Fogbust the Youthful Assembly the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Lanceboars the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Sweetnessstands the Climactic Taker the zombie giant, d. 259

#### One Hundred Forty-Four Other Kills

Five slug men in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant slugs in The Belted Jungle  
Four bushtit women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant ticks (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Two peregrine falcon men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Six skunk women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two raven women (♀) in The Belted Jungle

### The Kills of Solon Lâvenkol Salirnisg

#### One Hundred Forty-Four Other Kills

Five slug men in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant slugs in The Belted Jungle  
Four bushtit women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant ticks (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Two peregrine falcon men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Six skunk women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two raven women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Four giant flying squirrels (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Four skunk men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Three giant echidnas (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
One giant moth (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
One giant bushtit (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Five kakapo men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Three crow women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Three kakapo women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Four panda women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant mantises (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Four giant sparrows (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two giant flying squirrels (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Three tick women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Seven snail men in The Belted Jungle  
Two crow men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Two grasshopper men (♂) in The Belted Jungle  
Two louse women (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Three giant grasshoppers (♀) in The Belted Jungle  
Two flying squirrel men (♂) in The Belted Jungle

I once heard Solon speak of her time in the jungles of her youth, abandoned as a child. The beasts of the wild thought her easy prey. She proved them wrong. She crafted her own spear, taught herself to use it, and fought off entire armies of the beast-men of the jungle. It is a terrible place there, but she survived for years before coming here, her only wounds a missing leg. Warriors have gone into that wood, whole companies, not to be seen again. And here she stands with us, spear once more killing beasts.

I can almost feel the bond strengthening between these warriors and their weapon, Sulin herself has achieved a new ease



Highmax...dead, flesh torn from him, though his skill with the sword was unmatched...military...Nearly destroyed. Rhunorah... dead... Mastahcheese returns...dead. Gaul...alive, still locked in combat. NAV... Alive, drinking booze.... I can't...can't keep going. Next person...will have to take my place. My term as overseer isn't yet over...but I can't keep going, I can't. The Light save us all; we'll need all the help we can get.

And Highmax...I cannot look...Fain again has claimed him, taking him again for his own. I fear now that Highmax would not know me, and that he would seek my flesh if he could. It has been a bloody week, but our military is stronger. That is what I must tell myself

---

## Highmax's Last Stand

I came on the battlefield after many days of combat training. Days ago, I was sent to the fields of war on the front lines with others. This was a suicide mission, but we will battle until we crush every Threadromancer alive. Ur will tremble if We survive. But it is unlikely... Many are falling already but we slay many and more take their place. I raised my blades and use them as I have done before, as a great vortex of death, each strike is as deadly to the living as to the dead. I'm wounded but alive still. I fight on, and I don't use my magic again. I already drained myself in my last spell to attempt to bring myself closer to killing Ur, but I couldn't tell if I succeeded or not; the effects don't show until the "time is right". I will slay Ur, and if I die, I can only hope

DwArfY can remember how he brought me back from undeath. I see others affected by the curse of undeath, and I cry for them. My tears flow in vain though, and all I can do is give them mercy with my blades.

I watch as another falls next to me, overwhelmed. NAV has fallen back, and I feel... Alone...

A shadowed zombie appears before me, and I cannot tell if I am going mad or not; it looked just like it was in my mind when I returned my memory. I raise my blade and we fight. I cannot tell what's going on anymore, as the dead begin to overwhelm me, and I slay more undead, but the shadowed one was the only one I could see that no others dealt with. I felt time slow down as I split the bastard's skull, only to have a thread zombie sink his teeth and claws into my neck and shoulder. I let out a cry in agony, and I rip his skull out, throwing the skull away quickly. I then dropped my shield and held my blade in both hands, striking down many with my blades. I slaughter them, swearing to Ur I will kill him. Then I am overwhelmed, but they don't kill me. The shadowed thread zombie was gone, but where it was stood another Threadromancer. He was grinning.

"The Dark One wants his pawn back. You were given the chance to return to us as something greater, but now you will serve us in death."

He then had a strange blade with a hook on it in his hand and began to remove my skin, slowly and painfully. I wanted death, but I held firm, struggling to kill that bastard. I then lose consciousness, and I feel the cold hand of Ur come again... And the next thing I know, I returned home again...

Back home to Necrothreat I again... But I feel like I'm not alone here as I was before...

## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### In Necrothreat the Shadows Fall

In Necrothreat the shadows fall,  
Beneath the stars in hallowed hall,  
But yet we stand, the Forumites,  
And none shall pierce the door or wall.

In Necrothreat the gods wage war  
And evils from the ancient lore  
Are seen in fields of withered corn,  
Before we rise to shed their gore.

Ah, Necrothreat you bleed and weep  
As Fain goes raising death from sleep,  
And open graveyards serve as wounds  
Which cut in two our mighty keep

Our plight is grim, the halls seem dim  
But hope is here to battle fear;  
They come, they come, the saviours come  
To battle death itself and win

Amongst them stands Highmax the brave,  
The fighter, the swordsman, the knight;  
And from his helm the sun shines forth,  
His blade has ever rent the night

Then Nav appears, the merry man  
Who set down ale to fight the dead;  
His bolts are always piercing foes  
To turn the rivers water red

From angers hate and Armok's hold  
The Dwarfy One is seen in light  
And now his fury shall be seen  
To pit itself against the Blight.

The surgeon grim with hacksaw bared,  
And bloodlust shining from his eyes,  
Is seen in shadows fighting death-  
So Sprin will fight where Jenny lies.

Then Mastahcheese on reindeer rides,



His wife in glory goes ahead,  
And on the ground are flowers strewn  
For hooves to stir as on they tread

So Ruhn is seen with yellow eyes  
Which glow like fire to see in night,  
And in his hand an axe is clasped  
That streams with blood which mocks the light

Oh Apiks, Apiks, he has come  
To ride with honour at their head.  
His mind is full of Elder lore,  
And in his hand his pick is red.

In Necrothreat the shadows fall,  
Beneath the stars in hallowed hall,  
But yet we stand, the Forumites,  
And none shall pierce the door or wall.

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#### Highmax Begins his Journey Through the Old Homes:

I stood up and noticed, unlike before, I don't feel so sick and hurt. I am also clothed. Perhaps my learnings of magic have aided me? I cannot think anything else. I don't feel alone at all, but I see no one. I notice also that I carry that strange blue sword at my waist, but nothing else to protect me. And here I began to ponder my objectives;

- 1) Find a way out of here alive
- 2) Kill Ur

Both at this time seem like impossible tasks. For starters, DwArfY revived me and I had to suffer immense pain before I could escape.

I must say though, the land seems as desolate and barren as before, but I'm dawdling here. I walked into the fortress and I felt a great shadow loom over me as I crossed that damned bridge. It felt as if every bone in my body was hit with an ice cold wind with needles sticking into my body. I stepped back and got away from there. I guess I'm not headed that way so soon. The sky was the same as before; a dark grey, no sun, no moon, just grey. The land now seemed to have blood patches every now and then. I walked up to one and I swept my hand through it. Most of it was years old and permanently stained the earth, but one was fresh, and it trailed off into some nearby hills. I sighed as I readied my great journey through the dark and desolate wastes of the old homes. I walked for what I thought seemed like ages, but the distance told me I walked for about twenty minutes at the most, and I saw a cave not far from the top of the hills where I stood. I went down to it, noticing the blood ran into it as well, but was slowly going away, showing the wound was either being

dressed or the bleeding stopped.

As I got closer to that cave in the hills, I heard a hoarse breathing, as if something had their lungs torn out. I walked in cautiously, that blue blade ready to be unsheathed at will. I walked deep enough and saw a cloaked figure shaking. I walked towards it, not caring about my own safety at this point. Whatever it was, I don't think it would harm me. It turned and stared at me with eyes of horror and shock. It was a face I was hoping never to see again so soon; Ruhn. He was shaking all over and had bloodstains all over his cloak. He shifted away from me as if I was a monster and gasped, covering his face.

"Perrin? Is that you? I... I'm so sorry about the vampire... I couldn't save you..."

He stopped shaking and inched a little closer, squinting his eyes as he looked at my face.

"Highmax? You're... You're here? No... You shouldn't have come here! It's too dangerous!"

"I've been here before... I don't think this is the afterlife, but some hell in between life and death, though I don't recall you were eve- oh... Wait..."

I realized that at some point, I accidentally resurrected his body instead of sealing the vampire away. Needless to say, his being here was MORE than my fault.

"That damned fortress... I can't take it anymore..."

He grabbed me and shook as he did.

"I cannot even kill myself here... I just die and then get resurrected feeling every inch of pain... I just ripped open my throat before I walked over here... I cannot take this place anymore!"

I heard footsteps come down from the cave entrance and I heard a voice I didn't recognize at all, and the outline of a tall and majestic forumite. I couldn't see his face though in the darkness of the cave.

"He's succumbed to madness now. You cannot save him, child. All souls that were resurrected and brought here are condemned, whether or not their bodies are killed or not. Only magic and certain feats can set us free. You did one of these feats, with some magic in it if I recall."

"Who are you? I can't remember ever hearing your voice. And I remember much of Necrothreat and its second rising."

The majestic forumite laughed and kept his kingly posture as he walked towards me.

"Of course you wouldn't remember me; we never met. My name is Toady One the Great. I am the firstborn of the dead forumites. I was condemned here during the first years of Necrothreat when Apiks screwed up his aquifer plug. Then you know what happened during the fall, but my body remained underwater and half resurrected, so I was stuck here for many years. I watched ages go by, a world get destroyed and become this world, and then the rise of the second Necrothreat. I must say, I'm pleased how well it turned out despite the dangers that come at us regularly."

I dropped to my knees and bowed.

"Lord Toady One, I, Highmax, am unworthy to stand in your presence. You are a hero and god amongst forumites. I kneel in awe of your greatness."

He laughed and pulled me to my feet.

"I got much to tell you, child. And perhaps, you may be able to save us from this Hell. Now walk with me as I tell you the true story of Ur and Armok, not the one you read as you regained your memory..."

#### Highmax Learns the True Stories of Armok and Ur:

I walked with Toady One as he explained to me the stories of Armok and Ur... And I think we can fix SOME things, but it may require more forumites than just me and Toady One.

Below is what he told me, and as I write this, he is speaking it to me with all that he knows with his deep well of wisdom and knowledge:

The Story of Armok, God of Blood, and Ur, the High Lord Threadromancer  
Before the time before time began, there was darkness and no worlds or planes but one small island amongst the darkness. There were two brothers in this darkness, one was chaos, the other was order, and they constantly argued. One day, chaos struck order, and order spilled blood. Order then struck chaos back, spilling his blood back. They fought long and hard, struggling to show which one was greater and their blood mixed, and from it, a being was created; Armok the Blood God was born. He struck down Chaos and Order and let them become warring entities of existence. Armok then forged many planes of existence, and many worlds. He even created lesser gods, dwarves, humans and elves. He grew weary and caused the elves and dwarves to fight; the first war began when the Dwarf King slew the Elven King in a drunken rage, and both races began to wage war. He took the blood from the fallen and grew stronger. He enjoyed this very much.

He then created something that appeased Chaos; a race so vile and dark, that its sole purpose was to kill; the goblins. And from these, he created the bastard form of the goblins, the race of Kobolds. Soon, the world began to plunge into war and chaos grew stronger. Blood was spilled daily by thousands each day from each plane of

existence. Armok drank the blood like wine, and he indulged in it like a dwarf would drink booze. Thousands of ages passed, and Armok grew weary of the dwarves, elves and humans fighting goblins and kobolds. He then created a special plane of existence, and then created new races on top of the old, perhaps even mutating some of them. Here, he created the Forumites, the hardened people who used many strange tools and weapons. Then he created an enemy for them to fight; the high lord Threadromancers. The forces of Chaos and Order began to grow equal again on this plane, and chaos was great in power. But Chaos wanted to win this plane as well, and he instilled a power into the high lords, making them much stronger and more devastating. The first High Lord to receive the "blessing" of Chaos was Ur. Ur was killed before he could fully manifest his power, but when Necrothreat fell, everything in the world fell apart. All bonds were broken, the line between dead and alive blurred, and Chaos had succeeded in his ordeal. But then order did something; he made Armok weep for the forumites, and he reforged the new world, where Necrothreat II lies, overtop the old world, where we stand now. Ur in the overworld, as it is known as, has created a thin veil between him and the other lesser Threadromancers, and his power is he always taints them, forcing to do his will. They all follow him and say he is a god, but in truth, when the lines between life and death blurred, Ur was resurrected as a half dead, half living abomination; a resurrected High Lord. Weaker in body but much greater in his magical prowess, he tainted the land and made it his place of solitude where the souls of the undead roam as he controls them. Very few make it out, and those that do are never the same.

I asked Toady One if it was possible to return to the overworld if they dug deep enough, and he hit me, saying that we should never dig too deep. I then stood up, and I asked him where Ur dwelled. He told me he would show me the way, but he will not let me try and fight Ur, and he will chain me if need be. I told him just to show me and I will plan. We walked north, where the land began to freeze, and we kept on for days upon days until we were about four miles away from the biggest necromancer tower I have ever seen in my life. Lightning struck the air around it, and a cloud swirled around it as if a storm blew about. I never knew what it was like to feel truly afraid until now... And as much as I tried to be firm, I could not stop shaking. Toady then said he sits on his throne at the top of the tower, ruling over abominations that were much more grotesque and dark then what we ever seen.

But I knew I had to get in there. And to do so, I needed the largest army ever assembled... And the souls of the damned may just do the trick...

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### The Fall of Highmax

The blood was red as evening fell,  
It dripped from blade so blue  
That sky was caught as it was swung  
By Highmax brave and true

The zombies came in endless hordes;  
They stretched from sun to moon.  
As Necrothreaders drove them on  
They danced to Fain's fell tune.

From Necrothreat he came in haste,  
The wind was in his hair;  
He charged through gates and over walls  
To enter zombies' lair

His blade he swung to zombies' howl  
And limb was hewn from limb.  
His rage was great and terrible,  
His anger turned all dim

So on he went and on he killed,  
The dead lay at his feet  
Before they rose again to find  
Their heads cut off like wheat

And as he fought against the night  
A gleam came to his eye  
And strong the strokes which pushed them back  
From he who must soon die

Alas for Highmax the Swordsman!  
We came but hours too late  
To find his mind was caught by Fain;  
His death was damned by fate

He wanders now in Necrothreat,  
No thoughts are in his head,  
And all who meet him quake in fear  
To see Highmax un-dead

Oh Highmax! On he flying went  
To borders wreathed in fear.  
His rotting body he fled from  
To land of shadowed mere

He faces gods, un-dead and Ur  
To drive away the dark.  
His blade again is sounding death  
With sapphire-coloured spark

His strength is used to shelter men,  
His sword upholds the weak;  
With valour he fights to the end  
To find that which we seek.

But still we hear his mighty voice,  
It booms across the halls,  
And soon the hero will return  
To walk between our walls

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### Highmax Continues His Journey in the Land of the Old Homes

It seemed like years since we left the fields near the Dark Tower, as Toady One called it, but he said it was only a couple days. I couldn't tell since the day was dark and the night was just as dark. We left Perrin behind in the cave to his madness, despite us asking him to come with us. We kept on until we reached what appeared to be a small hamlet. There was only one thing; it was quiet and appeared deserted. Toady tells me it used to be full of life until the world was "broken" as he claimed. We passed about for a few minutes when I noticed that several shadows loomed over us every now and then. I kept a hand on my sword just in case. We walked into what appeared to be a shop and we settled down to rest awhile. I took second watch, and not long before Toady would awake, I saw a shadow passing by not far from us. I left Toady's side and stalked the shadow, quietly and quickly. I got about two feet behind him before he spun around and threw a dagger at me. I deflected it with my blade and I tackled him and held him down, blade pointed at his throat. He put his hands to his sides in surrender and flailed about.

"I give! I give! Just leave me alone! I won't steal!"

The voice sounded too familiar...

"You... You're Tal Denber... What are YOU doing here?"

I eased only a little so I could see his face. He looked like hell but he was Tal Denber

alright... Sleazy bastard seemed to notice who I was.

"You're that Highmax kid, right? Well I'll be damned, you're still around? Thought you became Capybara chow."

He snickered at this and got off of him and pulled him off the ground.

"I'm looking for other forumites that are damned here. Seen anyone else?"

He shook his head as we walked towards the shop.

"You're the only living things I've seen in a long time. I kept here because of the goods I found here. I got a whole stash not far from here. I must say, there are a lot of weapon shops here. If only those damn laptops had lulz..."

I realized that our issue back then was we couldn't work those things before but I recall we made lulz back at the old fortress.

"Tal, how about you come with us?"

He looked at me and laughed as if I said the funniest thing ever.

"Me? Join up with YOU? Oh god, tell me another joke."

I smacked the back of his head with my pommel.

"Ok... You're not joking. What're you planning to do if you find more forumites anyway?"

"We're going to kill Ur. He holds this "Dark Tower" as Toady One calls it and it's surrounded with many undead. I'm going to need the largest army to come forward since Glidesnarls."

He took a few steps back and shook his head.

"Glidesnarls was a MASSACRE, not a war. You think it'll be so easy?"

I gave him a look that asked him to test me.

"...Alright... I'll come along, but I get all the goodies they hold there! And I won't be on the front lines!"

"I'm fine with that. We need someone to build all of our camps for us."

I laughed as Tal realized he just got the short end of the stick he was hoping to give away.



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Tal Denber kept up with Toady and I for quite some time, but he kept fiddling with his daggers due to nerves. Toady took an exceptional two handed steel sword from Tal's hoard of weapons and the like, despite Tal's protests. We kept on east this time, and we came across a plain that seemed to have hills that gradually slope upwards. We marched for a long time until the steepness of the hills prevented us from going, so we turned south. There, after an hour or two of walking, we saw another necromancer tower not that far away. I thought that perhaps we could raid the place and perhaps burn the books and whatnot that were there. We marched onwards towards it, despite Tal's bickering about it "going into the lion's den".

By the time we arrived, Toady unsheathed his blade as did I, and we came in cautiously as Tal Denber watched our backs. We advanced slowly inside and saw ashes everywhere. I kept my blade in hand but didn't ready for an attack; the place looked as if it was not only abandoned, but ransacked. We searched about a bit and saw destroyed tomes, burnt bones and clothes. There was an altar on an upper floor that was destroyed by fire. We kept going up and up until we saw a gasping figure huddled in the corner. I walked towards it and it heard me. He pulled out a sword himself and disappeared. Suddenly I felt his blade cut deep into my side. Tal ran out of the room, looking for something to find the enemy. Toady grabbed a handful of ash and threw it into the air, showing us where the enemy was. I slashed at it and our blades clashed. Whoever this was, they must've been good with the blade. Though I could not see his blade, I kept on the attack, striking where I thought was an opening but I couldn't hit them. Just then, a burnt table came flying towards him; Tal seemed to have found something to help us. I jumped on the table as the figure roared and came back into normal view.

"Haxxor scum... What are you doing here?" I said as I brought my blade towards his throat.

"Forumite pigs... Do you not see fear incarnate? I am the great Haxxor Threadromancer! I am the beast that haunts your dreams! The creature that makes boogeymen tremble! The very gods fear me!"

I grabbed his arm and snapped it with ease. Haxxors DID have more brittle bones than us Forumites. He let out a scream of pain which brought joy to my heart after that incident during my first reign as overseer.

"I've dealt with your kind before. You Haxxor Threadromancers give me a pain in my arse. I'm going to make it easy on you..."

He laughed in my face.

"Fool! You cannot kill me! Anything that dies here comes back within moments!"

I grinned at the challenge. "Is that so?"

I grabbed the broken arm and waved it around as to give him a signal. His confidence left his body as he let out a scream of fear. I let my magic flow again as light filled the room and I made every bone in his body break within seconds of each other. It sounded like a bundle of twigs being snapped one after another very slowly. Only his neck and parts of the spine remained, making sure he lived still.

“You may be revived right away, but that doesn’t mean I can’t destroy your body before I do so.”

I grabbed his body and threw it off the balcony before releasing a great ball of fire that coated his body for a second or two. All bones that protruded out of his body would be soldered in place, and all wounds would close, but his body would be disfigured... A fitting end to the world’s greatest abomination...

We walked out and marched east again. The slope was less steep than before. But to the south, we heard what sounded like thunder. I looked at Tal and Toady and they heard it as well. Then we began to run. In haste, we looked for cover but the thundering began to get closer and closer. We kept on, never slowing until we saw a brownish white group of riders coming towards us. I stopped running and turned to face them; I saw they were forumites, like we were. Toady took the hint and stopped as well, as did Tal. I stood firm and they surrounded us. They were all clad in pelts, and they rode on reindeer. That seemed familiar, but I could not recognize it... Then one came up before us and dismounted. He, unlike the others, was clad in armour and pelts, and he seemed to be the leader.

“We meet again, Lord Highmax, Swords Enthusiast, Guardian of Necrothreat. It is good to see you after many long years.”

He took off his helmet and I stood dumbfounded; Mastahcheese stood before me, alive and well. I dropped to one knee and lowered my head. Another forumite in pelts came out and held Mastahcheese’s hand.

“Mastahcheese, it is an honour to see you again.” I stood up and extended my hand. “Any amongst your numbers from Necrothreat?” He nodded. “Esther and I found each other rather quickly. Jenny is with us and hangs back most of the time. She seems to miss Sprin very much however. She takes care of us and our wounds a little less painfully than Sprin did. And with less chainsaws.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, how did you get so many reindeer for a unit this size?” He grinned at me as I said this and said proudly: “Wife issues new mandate: construct reindeer farm” I burst in laughter at this as did everyone else. Even Esther herself laughed a bit.

“What news do you bring from the north, Lord Highmax? We will make camp and talk. I see Toady One the Great and Tal Denber Machinebend are amongst your company, which means we have much to talk about.”

Hours passed and we told Mastahcheese, Esther and Jenny the situation and our plan to rally the forumites. Mastahcheese looked puzzled but smiled a bit after I ended our story. "Well, I can say one thing; my reindeer cavalry stands ready for you to command. We have some spare reindeer for you three to ride. We were going to ride to Necrothreat to reclaim it, but we saw the tower along the way light up in the sky. We then saw movement, so we chased it down, and we found you three. I won't ask much, but I pray that was a Threadromancer?" I nodded. "Good thing; they seem to stay dead here unlike us. How many more forumites do you think we'll need before we march?"

I thought for a second, and then I realized even with this large force, we're rather useless. One hundred against a hundred thousand was suicide. Then it came to me. "We need more, but if I can rally the overseers we find, perhaps we can stand a chance! You may not be the only one here with an army at their beck and call. Any idea where to start?"

Mastahcheese stopped for a second to eat some of the reindeer cheese that he brought us. "Well... There's a fortress to the south and east more. We can get there in less than a week if we walked, maybe three days tops riding?" I nodded and bit down on a piece of cheese. One thing I still admire about this guy; he makes some DAMN good masterwork cheese. "We ride there after a good rest. Any signs that someone would be there?"

Mastahcheese looked up and let out another small grin. "Some others say there's a very large community there that worships a forumite that fights with no weapon and can kill legions by himself. I think I may know who is there, but I don't know for certain. In fact, I cannot remember his name... But enough talk. Let us rest and be ready to leave when we're fully rested."

I nodded after I got up and grabbed a small bedroll over by the back centre. We have the beginnings of an army, but not enough.

### Ur Begins to Stir...

We marched towards that fortress as quickly as we could, the thunder of hooves beating down under us. We made it in even shorter time, seeing the place in the distance by the time we rested for a good while. By the next time we rode we made it before we had to stop for another long period. There were indeed forumites there, but they weren't friendly in the slightest. I walked towards the fortress keep and the guards stopped me, saying I cannot enter unless "he" allows it.

We went to turn back when the guard went inside and came back out running saying he wished to see Toady, myself, Mastahcheese and Tal. We entered slowly, guards ready to stab us at any point. A forumite woman dressed in a rather revealing attire

came out and showed us the way to “him”. After several flights of stairs, we were brought to a throne room. A figure sat on the throne away from us, and the shadow veiled his face and his upper body. Something was off on him but I couldn’t put my finger on it.

He stood up as his voice boomed. “Your greatest warrior must do battle with me, newcomers. I will fight them singlehandedly without any weapons.” I stepped forward; I was Guardian of Necrothreat for a reason, I will not fall to this forumite today. He stepped forward, and then as I raised my blade, he moved quickly and kicked me in the side of the head before I could swing my blade. Next I felt several whacks hit me all over, but it felt as if he was using his upper arm, not his fists. Wait... No weapons? Not hitting me with his fists? I realized who this was when I took a kick to the chest and was knocked over.

I stood up and held my sword firm. “It’s been awhile... Lieutenant BFEL... I see you haven’t lost your art of fighting without any hands.” I heard my allies and friends gasp as BFEL walked into the “light”. “So you do remember me. Excellent. Then you will remember me when I hand your ass to you.” He charged forward again and, since I remembered much of his tricks, I parried the attack and got a swift strike in on him. I heard him grunt as his body stiffened for a second. I then grabbed him and let the magic flow through my veins as I threw him up into the air and punched him as he fell back down. “Good hit...” he responded. “You seem to have gained a few tricks... As did I...” Suddenly he quickly ran back to his throne where he pulled a lever hidden next to the throne. He stepped forward and he became clad in what appeared to be a strange armour that was locked into his body. When the helmet clamped onto his head, his breathing was audible but stable.

“You see, I managed to create something on my journeys here. I managed to harness a great power by being one of the first of my kind... You see, I am of Necrothreader blood, but I’m not one of them. I know why you’re here Highmax, you wish to seek aid against Ur and try and save this land. I will join, on one condition: you best me in combat. My armour makes me use my power I hold without actually becoming a Threadromancer.” His armour seemed to have mechanical gauntlets that glowed purple. They began to move as if his hands were inside of it. “Now come! Let us do battle!”

We ran towards each other and before I could land a punch, he grabbed my arm and tried to throw me, but I swung my blade at him with my free hand, cutting into the armour and rending flesh. He let out a grunt of pain and then he let his “hands” open up and he glowed purple again, with the flows going into him. I heard the sounds of animals squealing, but I paid little heed to it. I tried to sever the magic in the armour but it was futile; I couldn’t stop it. Was this the first time technology bested magic? His armour repaired itself as his wound closed shut.

“The two best warriors in Necrothreat... It’s fitting, is it not?” He began to laugh like a madman, as the purple aura drew back to his hands. He raised them towards me and a purple beam shot out to me. I quickly replied with a beam that shared the blue of

my sword. We were evenly matched; one falter from either one and it was all over. Almost in sync, we ended our clash and charged back towards each other again. His hands caught my blade before I could slash and he threw the blade away. I then threw another punch, flowing my magic into it to try and crush his armour. I landed my punch, but I ended up being blocked by his purple aura. Whatever that armour is, its damn near impenetrable. He then threw me across the room, and before I could get up, he was above me, grabbing me. I wouldn't let him beat me! I HAD to win! I let out a great roar of fury as flames cloaked my body, but never burning me. Then lightning grew forth from my body and electrocuted BFEL in his armour. Lastly, I rend the stone floor and caused it to encase his arms and legs without breaking him. After I ended he just laughed. "Well... That was... Shocking!" He laughed heartily and madly, as if it was the funniest joke he ever heard.

I let him go and he told me how he got here. He said when Necrothreat fell, he found himself back outside the fortress's walls. He felt inclined to get away, so he ran. But along the way, undead seemed to follow him. He killed them with ease, being a master of combat without hands, but they always stopped for a second as if they smelled or sensed something. He found out later they stop because they think he's one of them, but he isn't. He then travelled for days on foot, passing the tower and eventually making it here. He then found shards of armour everywhere, and then he let out a laugh, fell and terrible and used the corpses he found inside along with some pieces of metal to forge the armour. What he didn't realize was it possessed vampiric magic, making him seem undead to all senses but sight. He said he went to the tower when there was still a Threadromancer and began to torch the place without them noticing he wasn't undead. He left and came back afterwards, but other forumites followed him from the flames of the tower. They worshipped him as a god for killing the undead there, and they loved him. But he stayed here, for he knew they would return one day. Eventually forumites grew drawn here, for some unknown reason. Even some who Mastahcheese recognized were apparently in their midst.

When I asked how many were willing to fight, he said they all were... All two hundred of them. That brought us up to 300 forumites, but it still wasn't enough, even with BFEL's armour. As we walked outside, we heard screams of panic, and we all went towards the gates to see a large squad of 50 undead. All appeared to be thread zombies armed to the teeth. The reindeer cavalry was inside the walls, but we couldn't charge outside. I realized a small squad would have to fight them off. Toady, Myself, BFEL, Mastahcheese and even Tal readied ourselves when Jenny opened the gates. They opened slowly, and the undead began to come. My blade began to glow a brighter blue, just like when I was first here, and I charged, the others following me. I took the first thread zombie down by splitting it from the skull in half. BFEL tore on apart with his armour hands. Mastahcheese rode on his reindeer, distracting and killing as he trampled overtop the undead. Tal seemed to have gut one open before he ran off being chased by undead, claiming he "didn't sign up for this". Toady one fought valiantly and gracefully, crushing undead with ease.

The battle kept on until there were few zombies left. They then seemed to fall back, which was unheard of. I looked to the gates again and saw that a massive husk

dragon was on his way here. BFEL seemed to grow nervous. "It's him... The Great Dragon of Ur has arrived. We gotta get everyone out of here before he takes wing!" I looked at my blade. I never fought a dragon before, and we had no time to get out of here. I ran ahead and BFEL shook his head, mumbling about it was nice knowing me and dragon chow. I kept on at a steady run, the dragon eyeing me as I came towards it. Perhaps this was my destiny; to fight a great dragon in the depths of Hell. It let out a roar and breathed fire at me. I conjured a magical shield and blocked the fire, advancing slowly, if not at all. When his flames ended, I was ten metres away and this dragon towered me. I have never seen anything so huge in my life; not even those titans and forgotten beasts were as big as this. He let out another roar as he swung his claw at me. I jumped on the claw and stabbed into its rotted flesh. Holding on for my life, the dragon brought his talon closed to his maw, where I then jumped into his opening mouth. It was dangerous being inside a dragon's mouth, but after I began to cut everything in his mouth as I made my way towards his insides, it didn't matter too much. I slid down its throat with my blade, black husk blood coating my entire body as I went deeper into his innards. Before I made it into his stomach, I spun my blade around, severing the stomach from the rest of his body. I landed inside of the now flooding stomach where I began to make my way towards his heart.

I don't remember much after I began to climb up his ribcage to his heart. I was lucky his insides were hollow and empty instead of being filled with liquid. Black blood was filling up, but when I reached its heart, I stabbed it and climbed up to where it connected to the rest of his body. I severed the major arteries and I only saw black after then. I woke up afterwards with Jenny performing CPR on me probably breaking most of my ribcage in the process. I got up and saw everyone around me. "Where's the dragon?" I asked, still woozy. "Dead. You actually killed it." Toady One responded. "I hope the tales of dragon's blood are true; you were soaked in it. They say that dragon blood, when bathed in it for a period of time like you were, they become nearly invulnerable, but that's a story, and this is a husk, not a real dragon." Jenny got up and wiped the blood off of her clothes. "Well, at least I didn't have to give mouth to mouth... I wouldn't stand for the taste of undead blood..." Mastahcheese and Esther laughed a little bit as BFEL made a rude comment I couldn't make out. "Well then, fearless leader, where to next?" Tal said mockingly. I looked towards the south and I grinned a little bit. "Well... There may be seafaring folk. Southward it is again."

### The Maidens' Return

We marched for days, three hundred strong. We could see the oceans after what felt like five days. The land was heavily forested as we travelled closer, and eventually, we were marching through woodland; the living place for elves. We saw an abandoned retreat, followed by several corpses of elves. Lucky blighters must be immune to the curse of undeath. When we went deeper, we found another retreat, and we rested here. I don't know how deep into the forests we were, but we could

hear the waves crash along the shore from a distance. I scouted ahead and I saw shadows moving along the treelines. There were many, but they only watched. As I went on farther into the brush, I saw the coast, and two figures there, one carrying the other as if they had trouble moving.

I went closer to them and then several spears appeared before my throat. "Do not come closer; she is injured and wishes to die near water." A voice said. I could make it out to be a woman, and I raised my hands in surrender. "I mean no harm. I can heal her if I can if you let me." The spears lowered and I quickly walked to the figures. They looked VERY familiar. They were dressed for war for certain, but I couldn't make out who they were. The one carrying the other put down her wounded friend as I approached and raised a spear. "Who are you? Do you wish to harm us?" I shook my head and walked towards the wounded one. "I can try and heal her if you let me. Here..." I put my hand on the wounded's shoulder and let my magic heal. I only did this for DwArfY for his sanity, but would it be enough to heal physical wounds? My hand glowed slightly and she began to have steady breathing. After a couple seconds, she moved about and breathed normally, as if she was never hurt. She got up and thanked me.

Then, a large amount of forumites wearing black veils over their faces came out of the woods all with spears in hand. "You... I remember you... Your name is Highmax? You should recognize me, since we fought alongside each other before Fain cursed us here. If you don't remember, I am Chiad. The one you just healed was my sister in bond, Bain. We fought in Necrothreat and down here for a long time. She was wounded by a small army of undead we ran into. Now, how did YOU end up here?" She kept her spear pointed at me.

I explained to her my death and my quest about taking down Ur. She lowered her weapon after I told her about meeting Toady One. "And then after we met with my old Lieutenant, BFEL, we marched this way. I saw your companions but I couldn't recognize them. I healed her after I heard the one back there tell me she was hurt. Now that my story is told, will you join me and my forces? We would gladly welcome you to fight Ur's army with us." She let loose a slight grin. "We will join you. We are two hundred warriors strong. We have a village not far from here; we will lead you and your men there. Bring us to your allies first." I nodded and showed them to the camp. Our next destination would appear to be east along the coast. But as we marched on, something at the sea kept calling me to set sail to it... Was it Ur trying to destroy me? Was it Armok guiding me? Or was it something else? Whatever it was, it chilled me to the bone... Perhaps with our forces, we may be able to start dealing with the undead. But we still needed to grow in forces... And we needed a permanent camp to set up... Perhaps the old fortress where we stayed will work?

When we reached the camp of Bain and Chiad, we finally had a decent sized force of warriors ready to fight. But deep down, I knew it was not enough. I told Mastahcheese, Toady and the others to go on back to Necrothreat and await me there, and recruit any they find. They asked if I was leaving and I told them for a



while. The call of the ocean was maddening, and I knew I would eventually fall prey and answer its call. I knew that something awaited me deep towards the other shores somewhere or perhaps out on the sea. But I will go, but I will not lead others to their deaths with me. This is my burden and my burden alone.

They left after I told them to hold out inside the old fort, or if the place is too treacherous, stay outside of it but far enough to not be sucked into its call. I walked the beaches for hours until I saw what I needed; a small rowboat that I could work by myself. I pushed it out to the water and hopped in, putting down my sword and grabbing the oars. I then mutter to myself, answering the call of the seas. Whoever or whatever you are, I am coming...

...How many days has it been? How many months? I've been at sea and I never need to eat or drink in this forsaken land for some reason. I go on without any sign of land, and hours after land disappeared from view a fog rolled in. I've been drifting as I slept, though I've never seen a wave or had a single gust of wind. Everything was still. The sea no longer called to me, but I knew I couldn't go back... What was I looking for? I cannot even think or remember. Days passed, and then I saw something in the distance. I rowed towards it, but it disappeared into the fog quickly. I couldn't catch up with it.

I kept going on in its direction and that was when I saw land for the first time in a long time. I brought the rowboat ashore and pulled in onto the shore. I may be here awhile. I strapped on my sword again, and wandered inland. Whatever this place was, it was nothing like I have ever seen in my life. Glidesnarls was a long ways away, but this... This was nowhere I could recognize. I wandered for a while until I saw signs of a small village. I headed towards it, eager to see signs of life after so long at sea. But to my dismay, I found nothing. I went to return to the shore where I landed and saw figures following me in the dense fog that still seemed to linger. They were humanoid, but appeared rather taller and bulkier than a forumite. Humans perhaps?

I decided to instead let them follow, as I went inland instead of going back. The village was rather eerie, deserted of life and appeared as if everyone just up and left. I kept a hand on my blade in case something came out at me. But I knew I was hunted or stalked by those figures in the fog, but what did they want? Did they know I seen them? I kept on past the village, seeming to not grow weary as I marched on. I then headed towards what appeared to be an abandoned temple of sorts. I entered, thinking I could lure those figures out of the fog. I kept my blade drawn now, mostly because it was darker in here than outside. There wasn't much here save for an altar of stone which seemed to have dried up vines covering it. The symbol wasn't familiar at first, but I noticed a strange neck piece hanging off of the side of it. Despite how old the place looked, it shone like it was recently polished. It was a talisman in the shape of a sword with an image of a hammer in the blade. I heard rumbling as I grabbed it, and then the symbol of the altar made me regret what I did.

I just took something from an altar of a demon god.

Quickly, I tried to put it back, but the rumbling did not end. So I placed it on my neck, hoping it would give good luck, but what luck could help me now? The entrance sealed shut, barring my path. I was trapped. I then noticed that there was a rather new handwritten note that was beneath the altar, as if it fell out during the rumbling. It spoke about how the demon god was a traitor, and how Armok destroyed him for this. It also spoke of some other betrayal to Armok but it speaks as if the writer had been hiding that from Armok. It was strange but I felt as if the handwriting was familiar. I then noticed another opening off to the side. I seized my chance and dashed into it.

As I ran down the corridor, I looked at the talisman and I felt as if it belonged elsewhere. I then felt compelled to attach it to my blade, but I couldn't while I was running. Why was I running? I didn't need to. I slowed down and then I heard a familiar voice speak in my head. I couldn't handle it for long back then, but I can now. I won't let my sanity die on me... Not while I'm trapped in a demon god's temple. I paid no heed to them as I removed the talisman and tied it to the end of my hilt. I must say it seems fitting being there.

I kept on and saw a horrifying sight; a room filled with nothing but coffers loaded with bones, with skulls and other skeletons littered the room. At the far end, a black orb pulsated, as if it was beckoning me. I walked towards it, careful of the bodies that were in the room. I stood over that damn orb, and as I gazed at it, it seemed to gaze back without a face. I dared not to touch it, but my reflexes compelled me to just touch it. Before my hand was half an inch away, it pulsated brighter and more violently. I then knew this was something that was of an even darker origin than any High Lord in existence. Was this something that they needed? Was this a source of their power? I couldn't tell but I knew I must destroy it. I focused every ounce of magic in my body to destroy that orb. A single percent of power I used on that orb in those moments would've obliterated a forumite the moment it merely touched a single essence of sweat off of his brow. But it fought back, letting loose a great scream of pain, one that nearly deafened me. I kept at it, and then after a couple seconds, I took my blade and swung down, the blade glowing a bright blue. It destroyed the orb, but the blade changed.

On the side of the hilt now bore a heron. A strange sign for sure. I then heard the place rumble again, and I rushed out of that room of death. I saw back in the main room the entrance opened up again, but there was someone in the doorway this time. He was taller than me and looked stronger, but he was a forumite alright. "So... You destroyed it... I'm glad. That damned thing kept us from leaving this wretched place. You came here answering our calls... Come, destroyer, I will show you to my people."

I had never seen him before, but I knew I could trust him somehow. Who was this guy? And what was that orb? I pray that I never find out, but I may have to so I may escape here myself...

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### The Horn is Sounding War

A horn is heard to blare its sound  
In land of shade and rocky mound;  
It echoes 'neath the baleful sun  
And flows across the river's run

A shard of light, it pierces dark  
And lights the world with fiery spark.  
It spreads its blast across the land  
And rises high with soaring lark

The banners come with setting sun  
They crowd around the horn  
And listen to its brazen call;  
For Necrothreat they mourn

A hand on banner tightens white  
With anger boiling red  
And staff of war is held in fist,  
Recalling what they made;

In Necrothreat, In Necrothreat;  
They made in Necrothreat  
The fort which held against the dark  
As olden glory set

The spires like spikes there tore the sky  
And gates of gold were locked  
Against the vengeful zombie tide  
Where the dead, shambling, walked.

Those spikes like needles thrust too far  
'Til stars of light there shone  
Atop their toppling towers of stone  
Which now have long been gone.

Their works were trapped in deadly dark  
As kingdoms fell away,  
But still we see there Necrothreat  
Forever searching day

Now jump ahead to hear the horn

Send forth its vibrant voice  
To gather all the fallen men  
As Forumites rejoice

“Remember, remember” they murmur,  
A chant to match the horn.  
In waves it travels through their ranks;  
“To remember we are sworn”

The gleam of golden horn you see;  
It's clenched in land of strife  
And blown with fervour in this world  
By Highmax wielding life.

Again his call is heard around,  
And all come hither near.  
Apiks, BFEL and Mastahcheese  
All bring their war reindeer.

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### The Seafaring People

He told me his name was Dastot, which was the same in our language for spear. The village, or moreas the town with how many lived there, was only an hour away. He told me that there was strangeness to this land; that those who died stayed dead. Normally this was fine, but in this hell? It's a rarity and a blessing. Perhaps this land is untouched by Ur's taint? He brought me to the elder of the group, and I asked where we were and he smiled and told me we were in a safe place; a place away from Ur's taint. The orb I destroyed was apparently Ur's last taint on this place, sealed away and held back by enchantments and other things in that place we just left. The elder then told me he knew why I would show up, as it was foreseen by the one that brought them here. I asked if he still lived and he told me that the Deceiver can never truly die. If he died, he would be resurrected as a woman, and if she died as a woman, he would be resurrected as a man, and it would repeat until the end of time. It sounded very familiar, but I paid little heed to it. I immediately asked him if there were those here who would join me, and he nodded with a grim smile.

“Our men trained everyday for this day. They will join you. The women will remain behind with the children; they will be safe here from the taint of that demon-spawn. Five hundred men are yours to command.” I was shocked; that was a large force alone! And these were large hulking forumites that were all trained well in combat. I thanked him and then asked if he had ships to carry them across the sea, and he laughed. “Right this way, child. I will show you to the docks. Dastot, ring the dragon's bell, you set sail immediately.” He got up and showed me towards the shores, where ten longships with dragon heads marking the front and back. Their sails were marked also with a dragon, but only a side image. A bell went off, followed by a horn, and it

appeared every man had marched towards the docks, all armed to the teeth. They got on the ships and awaited me. The elder wished me luck and then we began to set sail. Somehow, they knew already where we were going and began to raise the sails, which carried wind, unlike during my travels at sea alone.

We sailed out, and Dastot was in the ship I was in. I asked him about the Deceiver and he told me that Armok had a servant that betrayed him, but killed a great evil when he marked the evil as a traitor to Armok. He was the father of Ur, the great demon. His mark was the one who I found the necklace on. I stared at that pendant and I asked him about it. He told me it was the mark of a lesser god, a forge god. The blade on it represented that he was the patron god of warriors as well. I held it for a second and then the fog rolled in again, thicker than it was before.

The ships kept straight on, but the wind seemed to die down. Suddenly, it got darker, and amongst the ships, we heard another ship sailing amongst us. Suddenly, a man shouted on another ship "Nagalfar! The ghost ship of the dead mean to kill us all!" Suddenly, we heard it close in, and another longship arrived which appeared to be made out of bones, skulls and fingernails. On it was an army of undead, led by a man in black robes. "You'll never make it to Necrothreat, Swordsman! You and the people of Apiks will never make it!" The name answered it all; these people followed Apiks! But... Where was he? I thought he lived and was still on the new homes? Then everyone drew their weapons; most of them were axes but some were swords. Then, the ship lowered a plank, and the dead began to come aboard. I charged and knocked several into the sea before the others behind me came by and did the same. Rain began to fall and thunder began to pound over the sound of swords and axes breaking bone and flesh. Many of the men cheered as the lightning struck, as if it was an omen.

I fought my way onto the ship of the dead, but there were just as many on board as there were coming off. But that robed man kept reviving anything I put down, so I couldn't stop the horde. I killed my way through and then grabbed him. I then felt him shock me, which hurt more since I was soaked from the rain. "Fight me, Swordsman! You cannot stop me! Not when I have much more allies down below!" Suddenly, the ship's floor broke open and husks began to climb out, all armed just as much as the others were. I swung my blade at the man, but he blocked it. I felt a dagger stab into my side as a husk attacked me, and I cleaved his head off. The body fought on, and I threw a fireball at the husk, burning it and keeping it dead. I then made a rock appear and cover one of the holes the husks were coming out of. It would only slow them down. I turned to the necromancer who stood at the bow of the ship. He cackled as a blade of blood red appeared in his hands. I charged, and we clashed. I swung my blade at him quick and he returned each one with a blow of his own, both of our exchanges blocked by the other. We were equal strong, and we were locked in battle; we would not escape the other until one died. More husks began to pour out, and then the soldiers began to start grabbing the dead and throwing them overboard so the necromancer couldn't resurrect them. I realized I had to do something, and then I charged the Necrothreader and leapt off the side of the ship.

I couldn't tell you exactly what happened there, but I saw what appeared to be two gods fighting. Ur, the robed figure fighting with a staff that was black as night, and a god clad in armour with a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other. Lightning struck everytime his hammer hit anything, and thunder whenever the sword clashed. This lesser god seemed to fight for us; wanting to aid our cause. I then saw the necromancer and I stabbed him with my blade as well as I could three feet under the water. I swam up and the battle above me continued, both with the gods and the husks and forumites. I couldn't keep myself up for long and I slowly let the sea swallow me. I watched as Dastot and the others fought on, sending more dead and husks to join me in the cold water waves. I closed my eyes and I stopped breathing as my head plunged into the sea. I felt nothing then. I felt the void of death, and it seemed that death also was permanent here, for I didn't feel that taint either. I felt free. I drifted and opened my eyes again. The dead ship was on fire now, and more dead fell into the sea.

I blinked and saw the flames and the battle with the dead. I blinked again and saw the lesser god fight Ur. I blinked again and saw the bone ship starting to collapse. Another blink and the god stabbed Ur in the chest, wounding him. Again, and the ship breaks apart and sinks into the sea. Again, and Ur escapes, black blood flowing out of his wound as the lesser god smacks him with his hammer. One final time and I feel a hand tug on my collar. I can breathe again, and I'm pulled up by two of those forumites. I gasp for air and all fifty men stand around me, Dastot standing overtop, trying to help me up. "We did it. You killed the robed one, and that gave us victory over the ghost ship. You truly are the great warrior the Deceiver told us about. We fought for him and gave him our loyalty, now we fight for you, swordsman Highmax." I got up and we saw the tainted land as the fog began to give way.

We landed, and all five hundred men assembled. We then began our long trek to the fortress. Even if we could fit the ships into the narrow river, we could never bring them upstream for long. For days we marched, and then we saw the reindeer cavalry coming to greet us as we saw their camp outside of the old fortress. It must have indeed been cursed then. Mastahcheese and Toady greeted me as they came by, in awe by the number of men I assembled to aid us. "We waited for you to return, but many thought you would never return. Toady and myself thought you would come back, and you came to us with a great army. What are your orders Highmax? Everyone has better arms now thanks to Tal Denber's hoard of weapons and the like, we only await your call."

Dastot handed me his war horn and as we marched down, I blew it, and the entire camp got up, everyone grabbing their weapons and armour. When I marched in, we all marched towards our destination; the mountain where the Dark Tower of Ur lay waiting for us...

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## Unknown Scholar, the Age of Heroes

Battle shall soon be joined!

They march forth to cleanse the land- to allow the dead to rest in peace once more!

The united armies of the forumites refuse to give in, even though the cost may be high.

Forward, to do that which must be done!

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## The Bloody Battle

We never stopped moving, all one thousand plus soldiers, all of us armed. Many were mounted on reindeer, and some hit their shields in time with our marching. We made it over the hill and saw that Ur awaited us all. The great armies of the dead were at the ready; dead thralls at the front with the heavily armoured husks towards the middle and the great undead monsters at the rear and sides with Necromancers riding them. The taint was so powerful and so thick that you could taste death on your lips. The air was thick now, and no fog of war coated the field, only the dust coming up from the earth of the thralls beginning to come at us. There were thousands of the mindless dead and they formed the biggest front, all with tooth and claw at the ready.

The seafaring people all readied their weapons, the maidens and their people as well. The reindeer cavalry readied to charge, lances and spears at the ready, and the followers of BFEL were all ready with their weapons, him at the ready with his armour. Bain, Chiad, Dastot, Mastahcheese, BFEL, Toady and even Tal were at my side as we moved towards the tower. As we went down the slopes, the thralls sped up, coming up to a trot. As they came to the root of the hills, I sounded Dastot's horn again, and then nothing but a cry of war echoing over the field as we ran down the slopes. Then the sounds of metal and wood meeting flesh and bone sounded as our forces met. The thralls fell quickly under our might, but the oddness was they didn't rise back up. They STAYED dead. Maybe Ur's taint wasn't focused on that? The seafaring people then set the bodies on fire, and more thralls died as arrows of fire ripped apart the sky, torching the fields. I slashed and stabbed, killing all undead before me, as a great storm of metal. We kept on, and we managed to destroy many of the enemies as we moved on ahead. The husks then began advancing as did the undead monsters. Bears, giant praying mantises, and even wolves were there. Arrows of fire kept on, and flames grew higher and higher as the chaos continued.

I heard a shout of war as Mastahcheese led the valiant charge into the enemy, cutting down the thralls and breaking off to meet the undead beasts as the husks advanced. No one will sing of this day, and no one will remember this day, for this day we fight to destroy the death lord himself. When we kill the enemy, we free



someone, and when we die, we are returned to the curse here. We fight, we kill and we die; none will stop our suicidal attack. The husks made it to us, and then the fighting was halted as the fires began to grow higher. We were stuck where we were and husks clashed their weapons with us. The seafaring people let out great war shouts as they fought the husks and destroyed them quickly as they did out at sea. Axes split skulls, swords split open stomachs, and decayed insides spilled across the fields. A rank stench filled the air as dead began to pile up and burn. Smoke coated the field and my eyes began to burn. I then cut my way through the husks, and the reindeer cavalry returned, trampling over the husks and the monsters. The Threadromancers began to come, but they were cut down by arrows and thrown weapons. Some fallen allies got back up, but they were cut down as well. Suddenly, deep roars from deep below were heard, and from the distance, twenty undead dragons came out and flew towards us. More fire engulfed the field, torching everything in their wake.

I could never explain the chaos in that moment and onwards. Undead wurms began to rip apart the earth as they emerged, and a great mass of ravens came out, creating a black cloud over the tower. They then descended upon us, ripping apart our forces as they devoured our flesh. I felt several bits of flesh come off before I unleashed flurry after flurry of spells. Lightning, fire, ice and even the earth itself was under my command. It was too much... I felt the magic consume me like it was trying to do when I was standing on top of Necrothreat. Flames engulfed the fields and the ravens were all gone now. The dragons fell down, but then a great roar was heard as the largest dragon I have ever seen took wing. It was larger than the one I fought days earlier. It then swopped down and began eating the dead. "Nhiddog! The dead eater takes flight!" the seafaring people cried. What were these monsters that they knew names for? Arrows filled the air again and bounced off its scaled flesh. It didn't breathe fire, but it didn't have to; the dead that dropped from its maw killed enough. It landed and ate more of the dead and began to move towards us. There were little forces on the field of war now, but the wurms and the dragon were destroying us all. I charged towards the dragon, his roars deafening my ears. I cut down many husks and thralls before the dragon was before me. It went to bite down on me but I plunged my blade into his mouth. It glowed brighter, then before as it dug into his flesh. His teeth didn't touch me and his jaw didn't close. It roared in pain as I began to cut into its body as I did again.

I stopped at its neck and began to cut through his neck and the beast roared. I saw the flames through the walls of flesh, and in seconds, the beast's head lay down before me. I climbed on top and saw the wurms being slain. I let out a victory shout as the thralls and husks retreated to the tower. The last of the reindeer cavalry charged as did the rest of us. All of us marched to destroy that tower, and then we butchered the thralls and husks as they fled. We ran them down, and then we made our way towards the tower. The leaders were at my side as we were covered in blood, gore and sweat. The last of our armies made our way towards the tower. And that was when the gates of the tower broke open and the greatest legion of dead, Threadromancers and undead beasts poured out to greet us. I charged and cut them down, the other heroes fighting by my side did the same. Death was at its strongest

here, and the air was so thick with it you could feel it seep into your bones.

I pushed my way in, the others fighting the waves that came down. I made my way up, receiving cuts from the sheer numbers but not even a single more than a scratch. I slaughtered many dead, and even more husks. I went up, floor after floor, and I heard cackling as I cut through the enemy lines. I had to release magic as I got four floors up, quickening my pace. Slashing and stabbing I cut through the enemy dead, and slaughtered them as they dropped. I burned even more dead, several times clearing an entire floor. I killed more and more, and I heard my allies making it up here as well. I knew I had to aid them. I then kept going, floor after floor after floor. I asked myself how many I went up; how many floors had I cleared? How high was I up now? It felt like miles up, as if I made it three times the height of the tower. I made it to a part of the tower where no dead roamed.

The room was strange, holding many symbols of birth. I then saw that there were signs of carvings used for the birth of a boy. I looked closer and saw my name. I ignored it as I went up again. It showed me then more signs about myself, my past life as I trained with a sword back in the first Necrothreat. I went up another floor and I saw the horrors I saw at the slaughter at Glidesnarls. Another floor and I saw my first days at Necrothreat with its signs. Was the tower trying to make me lose my mind? I walked up another and saw more of my time at Necrothreat. Each time I went up, it showed me more of my past until I made it to the fall, where on the next floor, a man in black and red robes stood before me.

“You’ve come Highmax... You said you would destroy me one day... Perhaps it is today... Perhaps it won’t happen. But even if you kill me, you won’t stop my forces; I’ve already dispatched thousands of Threadromancers to the above world, you cannot stop all of them!” Ur laughed.

“Above world?” I asked. “You didn’t figure it out? You are aware of what happens when you hit the cursed ores at its peak? You find a portal to the world of hell. And your worlds hell? Is this world... Yes, your new home is just plastered on top of the old world. Armok thought he trapped me, but he failed! I had many forces survive, and my death in the first years of time gave me power so great, nothing can stop me! Kill me now if you wish Highmax, nothing can save your precious world! The High Lord Threadromancers that lead the thousands of Threadromancers will take over for me!” He laughed and threw his head back. I charged and stabbed my blade deep into his heart. I looked into his shocked face as I twisted my blade. “I cannot stop your will... But I will kill you here and now...” I pulled my blade out, and everything went to hell then. The tower swayed, and it began to break apart from what I heard. I ran straight downstairs and heard crashing. I saw an opening rip on the side of the walls and saw that I was higher than I have ever been in my life. I never thought anything could be built so high up, but I kept on. I made it back down to the floor where my birth was symbolized and saw another opening in the wall; the tower literally was collapsing on top of me. I went down another floor and saw a portal opened. I knew I would die if I didn’t go in, but I jumped in anyway, and darkness surrounded me.

I was falling down in the darkness around me, but I then saw a figure in the shadows below me. There stood Ur, in his dark glory, blade in hand. He wasn't finished with me, I knew that. But I would stop all the madness here. I may not stop the dead plaguing Necrothreat, but at least I can kill their patron god. I landed and my sword was still in my hand. He charged at me, and I blocked, the blow staggering me from how hard the attack landed. I slashed back, his blade blocking with ease. This was indeed the hardest battle I will and have ever faced. His strength and skill was far greater than mine, but I had to defeat him. I began to channel my magic, using it to try and get an upper edge, and then he began to do the same but almost better. The darkness was all that was there, but we fought on. I slashed, cut and stabbed as he returned in kind with the same, blocks stopping every shot. He cut me a few times but they were minor wounds. I then saw an opening and I took it with my blade. He then broke my sword, and stabbed me with his blade. I dropped down to my knees. I will not die this day! I swung my blade as I jumped up, slashing his throat, blood splattering me. As he stepped back stunned, I plunged my blade into his heart. And then severed his head with magic extending my blade hilt. The symbol of the lesser god glowed now, and an aspect of the deity stood before me.

"I am proud of you Highmax. You finally destroyed the enemy of all gods and the living. I can give you one wish, but you must be careful, and you cannot wish for his will to be undone." I paused for a second and then came up with my wish: "I wish the dead that were in hell went to their heavens, and all that died in the land of the living would go to their heavens as well. No longer will they suffer the curse of undeath, and no one else will."

The god nodded and then light surrounded me. I saw Toady One and the others before me. They all beckoned me to join them in the Valhalla that awaited me. But I shook my head at them. "I need to protect the world of the living. Someone has to save the people from the armies of Ur. And someone has to tell them that the death god is slain. I will go; you all enjoy yourselves in the afterlife." They nodded, and went their way. I turned around and saw the portal to the land of the living. There would be no eternal slumber for me; not as long as Ur's forces lived. But now that that hell is gone, we can finally die and live our lives without fear of suffering eternal pain. I stepped forward and found myself back in the halls of Necrothreat, where Th4DwArfY1 stood in awe, tears in his eyes and face of shock.

"You've come back..." He said. I nodded. "There is work to be done now that Ur lies dead. Come, I'll tell you all that has happened..."

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## **Memories of Apiks, the first**

### **Prologue**

Huh? Where am I? What's going on? NAV? Why are you running at me with that blade? NAV?

\*slash\*

My head falls to the ground, blood spurting with my eyes widening in row with an unbelieving gaze as I see the ruin all around me. Death and destruction everywhere. NAV surrounded by undead. My wife, one of them. I see NAV moving in to attack my wife cautiously. She lunges forward with her inforumitian strength and just as she was about to reach him, hands extended, NAV hit her head with the hilt. Skull splitting in half first and then breaking into many parts which in turn pierce the inner part of the head and in the end all that is left is a misshapen face of what it used to be.

I feel a surge of anger within me, directed at the man who had done such thing to my wife, until the moment I see NAV killed by... by none other than The Toady One. An immense feeling of guilt washes away all my anger and replaces it. It was I who had sent The Toady One to his death and now he has come back to pay the price of my blunder. NAV, the last alive has perished under the azure gaze of Armok.

\*drop\* \*drop\* \*drop\*

Is this Rain? It has been so long since I have felt anything. Is the earth trembling too? Does it even matter anymore? Everything is over. Everyone is dead. Our mission ends here. I am sorry my love. I was not capable of saving the world. Everything is but a glimmer of what has been. The skies turn a brooding ashen colour, the cacophony of death washed away. Not even a twinkle of light remains anymore. It all ends like this. Why does it feel so peaceful? Have I given up? I cannot think anymore. My time is null. I embrace this nonchalant feeling of dullness and surrender myself to it. Let it be over.

---

“Apiks.... Apiks... Apiks! Wake up, Apiks!”

I quickly awaken with a stir and see a mining brother next to me. Sweat had engulfed my whole body and everyone in the hallway looked stunned. They had never looked at me like that before. It always used to be with respect of my lineage. It was that dream again. It keeps repeating itself over and over. Now it has reached the point where I am collapsing in the middle of the hallway with convulsions. I must hurry with finding *it*. Everything will be explained then.

DwArfY storms right next to me and worriedly asks what happened. He even went as far as to suggest an escort be put on me. I quickly cut him off and retorted cruelly that I had no need of such a thing from somebody like him. An Abomination. DwArfY's wide eyes looked at me for a good amount of time before he stormed off much like the same way he had come in. What I said to DwArfY did not fill me with dignity, but I cannot let anybody find it before me. I cannot.

## **Memories of Apiks, the first**

### **The Discovery**

Pound. Pound. Pound. I stir, wake and then drift off again. Pound. Pound pound pound. I gasp and jerk upwards, my blankets sliding as I move. Pound. Pound. Pound. Growling, I roll out of bed and dress hastily, numb fingers slipping on the buttons of my clothes. The winters in Necrothreat are cold. I stuff my feet into my prized pair of woolly socks, put on a coat and stalk out of my room and into the empty halls of the fortress. Empty, that is, except for the constant pounding which seems to fill everything with noise. I grit my teeth and try to restrain the irrational anger boiling through my veins. After I learned the secrets of Travelling, I learned constraint against the influence of Armok. To an extent. Light, but sometimes it feels like I learned nothing at all. But I fight back the anger, calm myself, and get on with what has to be done. I follow the noise to its source, winding through corridors. When I find whoever is doing this, I'll...Well, I don't know what I'll do. One way or another, I'm going to get at least one night of dreamless sleep.

I make my way to the source, some distance from my bedroom. The noise reaches a fever pitch, then stops suddenly. In the eerie silence which descends, I can hear my own heart thumping in my chest. My hands feel damp and my neck tingles. I'm scared. The silence stretches on as I walk, the noise of my footfalls the only sound as night fills the halls. The walls around me slowly grow rougher, they look freshly mined. I stroke one groove as I pass, feel the rough edges. It was recently mined. I follow this new branch until I meet with a chamber, a hollowing in the rock. As I enter, a panting figure shrouded in shadow which had been sitting down, stands up, a blade glinting in its hand. It rises, rises....and falls, hitting the rock with a resounding pounding sound. A pick. The noise picks up again, a flurry of strokes, the like of which only a master-miner could achieve. Apiks.

I stride forward, determined to stop this. The mining operation was only to be undertaken during the day! Grabbing his shoulder, I twirl him around with angry words on my lips. They die there. Twin pools look at me, an abyss which sinks into eternity. I stumble backwards, pressing against the rough-hewn wall. If the stories speak of the knowledge of Apiks, the only one to remember even part of his previous life, these eyes speak of a legend, one who knows not just of his own life, but more. The eyes of one I should not command. My breathing picks up, rasping in the silence. Those eyes look at me, then turn back to the wall "come. Watch." His voice echoes with authority, and I obey. His shoulders bunch and then release, his pick sinking deep into the living rock.

Those eyes...they recall the myths told around a roaring fire, the tales whispered as he walks past. Those stories which recount his noble blood line, a direct line from Apiks himself, the Trickster of old. They put a different light on him than just another miner, another lackey churning through the depths. He digs because he wants to, because it has been the Family creed. To dig, to find, to treasure. They say that the

medallion around his neck, a drop of pure red as like a crystalline drop of blood hanging from a cord, was blessed by many powerful forces which have long fled from this plane. He is Apiks, nothing more needs to be said. Except, maybe, that he is not the Apiks of old. Not now, not yet. His story is a long one, his memories fractured into many fragments. But at times he shows great wisdom, more even than from those who are called leaders and kings. None can explain him, he just is. He exists like a mountain which towers into the sky, ever present. Powerful forces like wind, rain...gods...may beat against him, try to topple him. And yes, he is worn, just like that mountain. But he is strong, he stands. He stands, though man and forces beyond the ken of beasts and nature beat against him. His will is as of iron, no, steel! The metal which stiffens the backbone of every Forumite, that flows like molten lead in their veins. He is the embodiment of a people, and he is their hero.

I stand and watch, awed by his sheer physical power as he hews and tears at the rock. Alas for the Apiks which we once knew, for if this is his shadow then the man himself must have been a being indeed. The pick pounds and punches at the rock and stone. Ore glitters like gold on the walls. We move faster, further.... Pound, pound, pound, RING. The pick glances from the wall, unable to penetrate any deeper into the stone. With a sound of rending metal, the pick shatters into many pieces, shards shooting off into the darkness. There, in front of Apiks' awe-struck face glows a ruby-red gem, standing from the face of the wall in small pillars of crimson crystals. The face of Apiks is bathed in an otherworldly red light which seems almost to seep into his skin. "Bloodstone" He sighs, breathe wheezing out of his lungs. In the grip of the crystalline pillars is what seems to be a scroll, a roll of aged paper held, but not trapped, by the gem. My heart beat quickens. What have I gotten myself into?

**You have struck bloodstone!**

It strikes. The cloud that had shrouded my thoughts seeps through my flimsy barriers and overtakes my mind. I am Th4DwArfY1! I will not...not...I will not what? I am Armok, all shall fear me! Like a pestilence I shall sweep across the land, killing, always killing. I will bring death, destruction, and you shall be glad, for it came from me. I am Armok!

I look up at my Adversary, He Who Holds Knowledge. I look into eyes of ivory with eyes of ebony. A greatness, as of the shadow of wings, fills the space behind me, consuming all. A brilliance, as of the light which bounces from clear-cut diamonds, spreads from him in rivalry to my power. I sneer at his presumption.

"Come, dog. You will not defeat me. I am no longer a puppet; I am simply me, LORD OF BLOOD" The darkness behind me grows, gains another dimension, and pushes against the white. "Feel my power and tremble, dog! Bah, you are but a shadow of my ally of old!"

A darkness falls on Apiks. "My forefather never served you, Father of Lies. None of the memories speak of it." Nevertheless, the shadow gains an inch, pushing back the Light. I look into Apiks' eyes and smile, baring more teeth than is Forumly possible. But I am no longer a Forumite, I am above that now. A part of me fights this statement, rebels. I squash it back down, and its noise ceases. I am no longer a Forumite, I am the MASTER!

"Mewling mutt, I will strike your pitiful figure from the face of the earth, and scour your bloodline from the histories. I will bathe your name in blood, let it sink and drown in it, and you shall be forgotten. Forumites will once more come under my command!" I feel the spittle flying from my mouth, spraying the air in front of me. Apiks watches on, a look of disgust clouding his face. The Light pulses, strains, and regains the inches lost.

"Mutt, you call me," he growls between clenched teeth. "Mutt! And yet my line stretches back, my family has whispered tales of betrayal and fame, of wealth and despair. And weaving through them all, the bringer of blood, the serpent in the grass. You. And you know what those stories say? They do not call you fearsome, brave, terrible or powerful. They call you coward, a backstabber. The knife in the dark. Well, you are not in the dark now, Shade. I see you, and you will not escape the fury of my Fire!" The light grows brighter, brighter, and it becomes hard to see through it

I step forward, tides of darkness foaming and moving about my arms and feet. The Light it touches turns to dark, gets caught in the flow and helps power it. I can feel it. None can beat Armok, especially not a shadow of a shadow!

Four things happen at once. Apiks, who had been backing into a corner, stops. His back has hit the wall. The cord around his neck seems to grow as heavy as a chunk of lead, and the leather snaps, bringing the bloodstone shard across the skin of Apiks, piercing it in a long, thin line. Beads drip from the wound, fall to the recently mined bloodstone in the wall. An explosion of colour radiates from the gems, enfolding the Light and washing away the black, a light of many rays dancing in front of my eyes, piercing my mind...I scream, falling to the ground. The shadow of feet appear in my vision, and I look up to see Apiks standing over me, hand out-stretched, as if trying to help.

"Feel my wrath, snake," he mutters. His eyes blaze down at me, liquid gold burning through to the very centre of my existence

From the broken cord the medallion slips down, touching my skin. I scream, a fire of red flares pulsing next to my heart, coursing through my veins. But I am not a thing of blood or veins, I control them, and do not need them. He will not beat me in this way! I AM ARMOK, GOD OF BLOOD. A stirring in my mind alerts me, a beaten dog that creeps towards a merry blaze. The me before I was reborn goes to the red, becomes part of it, helping it. The pressure builds, builds...I scream, the pure power forcing the air out of my body...The force of the blast strikes me from this body, from this dimension. A cloud of roiling black boils from my mouth, and then silence. Apiks



stands with medallion in hand, looking down at me. His figure seems to be in two pieces yet, but more powerful, more potent. I slip away to the sounds of Apiks calling for Sprin.

### **Memories of Apiks, the first**

“Get Sprin over here. I have need of him. No questions.”

The miners give me a bemused look of both surprise and horror. Did the silent and respected Apiks just talk to them? The end must be nigh.

“Didn’t you hear me?! Get going! We don’t have any time!”

Their gazes break off and they hurriedly start running through the hallways to fetch Sprin, as if fearing for their lives. As the last one goes around the corner, I immediately return to the place of the encounter and take the blood red medallion. Armok was sure to fail the moment he took control of DwArfy in this place. It is a good thing he didn’t realize who I was. What would Armok the fool think if he found out it was the same Apiks that founded the first Necrothreat, his faithful servant, that beat him in a duel? That is something to think about later. For now I have much work to do now that I have found the scroll. So much wor—

With that in my mind I collapse and through blurred eyes I see Sprin turning up, alas too late for the shadows of my past overtake me. . .

### **Memories of Apiks, the first**

With a loud, almost ghastly, gasp a forumite falls to the ground with a thump from a sphere of light, completely naked and bathed in a transparent embalming fluid. The surrounding seem to be compromised of tall marble white pillars, ebony tiles and tapestries on the wall depicting what seems to be the turning of the world.

Before the forumite stands a figure clad in black elegant clothes, a curved cane and a bowler hat. Something familiar stirs at the back of your mind as you watch these two creatures. You see the forumite get on his feet and start talking with the man. The forumite seems to be waving his hands in outrage and finally lets his arms fall beside him in a sign of resignation. Suddenly a ridiculously loud indifferent noise enters your head and your vision loses focus quickly goes in and out of focus. The world before you is turning upside and down so fast you can’t react and the cacophony of sounds in your head doesn’t make it any easier to regain yourself.

Your presence is thrown around the chamber in a frantic effort to retain control and

after a few thrashings you find yourself being thrown again, this time at the forumite, barely even recognizing the course you've taken. You brace your mind for a crash and a crash is what you get. Your mentality feels like it's hit a solid wall made of ice and fire. It freezes you as quickly as the fire melts it and burns you as quickly as the ice cools it. It is going from one extreme to the other in the space of a fraction of a second. The mental fatigue of what you just experienced immediately takes its toll and your consciousness melts away inside the forumite, your essence merging with its.

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### Highmax Returns

His steps were light upon the stone,  
His sword did gleam with light,  
As into night Highmax was plunged  
He readied for the fight.

The Fight! Ah, what an epic fight!  
The bards yet sing its praise.  
His sword was up, his sight was red  
And on he fought for those he led!

The blood like banners smeared the walls,  
Engraved to show his life,  
But on he came; Highmax the Brave,  
To end Ur's reign of strife.

"For Necrothreat," he mutters now,  
His hand upon the door,  
And as the hinges squeal with rust  
"For Necrothreat!" He'll roar.

That room above the tower of doom,  
So shaded and innocent  
From which the lands around were seen,  
Became the site of fury spent.

The hearth of home will call us all,  
Though some will fight and cuss,  
And so his blade will search for foes-  
For Necrothreat; for us!

Highmax's sword pierced his foe-

"Ebony, ebony,  
He shot me through with ebony,"  
Ur groaned above the sea.

"Not ebony, you foolish swine!"  
Spoke Highmax in tone of dread,  
"My blade it was; a thing of Light!"  
He growled, then struck him dead.

And so we live in Necrothreat,  
Beneath the watching moon,  
And ware to all who strike at us;  
Highmax is coming soon

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## Chapter XII

### The Second Rule of Th4DwArfY1 after the quiet rule of IronTomato the Redeemer

A bird floats high above the grounds of Necrothreat. It swoops low, then circles high. Its life is filled with the vibrancy of life, offsetting the blasted lands, the fields of ashes, many feet below. A truly desolate place. The bird drifts down and lands near a tree. It preens itself, then turns its beady eye upon the ground. Even in ashes there is life, and it intends to feed well today. From a gate beyond the raven there issues the sound of drunken revelry, but it doesn't care. What reason would the raven have to listen to the stunt-men? Instead, it fluffs its feathers of midnight and returns to its search. Suddenly the stench of decay hits its senses, and it looks up curiously. *Food?* That was the thing which fixed its mind as the corpse above it leered down. *Food?* Its neck was grabbed and twisted, a sickening popping sound shattering the silence, and its body was thrown upon the ground. Its black feathers stir in the chill wind, but no gleam of life lights its eyes.

There is no life in Necrothreat.

Th4DwArfY1 wakes up, startled. Sweat makes his hands seem like iced blocks, and his throat is dry. He turns his eyes to the door, the door which he knows he must turn to. The door through which he must go. To do his duty. To help the fort; to clear his name. Those who call him Abomination cut him deeper than any blade or undead-talon ever could. And his eyes.... they look at the door to his room with a deep pool of fear welling up behind them. They can wait. They must wait; he could not explain himself; not yet, anyway. To help clear his mind, he walked over to his writing desk. He picked up the quill, dipped it in the ink and began to write, to chronicle his own story. Maybe it will do someone, somewhere, some good...

## 6th Galena

As it always does in Necrothreat, this story begins with a death. The fields of the battle lay littered with corpses, or as the men had taken to calling them the “sleepers”. As any soldier would be willing to acknowledge, no sleeper slumbers for ever, and all raise from their tombs in time. Something we are sorely lacking, here. Time. For as it stretches on, the number of Ur’s forces increases. There seems to be a change amongst them, though. A disorientation that I do not know what to make of. But alas, I would find the reason out soon enough. This is what happened.

I am given to understand that the previous overseer was a fool, parading in pomp and ceremony, leaving the doors wide open for a spot of “spring cleaning”. Needless to say, the man was quite mad. IronTomato was his name, and his head was as thick as the fruit for which he was named. But he left the doors open, and that is what counts. For it was through those doors that NAV bravely marched, on an errand of vengeance. Too many we had lost, too many. His blood boiled with the injustice of generations suffering under the administrations of Ur, of Fain. His mind, so often soaked in booze was for once sober, keen as a tack. As he marched past, ignoring my call to return immediately, lest the zombies have him, he took a swig of ale from the ever-present flask. It only occurred to me later that he hadn’t stopped drinking at all, but that his mind had risen above such petty things as being drunk. He was a Forumite, through and through. Beer was his craft and his pleasure, but he marched for more than his own pleasure. He marched with the ghosts of his friends and family, of every member of the fort’s dead, riding upon his shoulders. As he passed through the door, he gave a huge belch which seemed to rattle the door frame. Then he was through, and the spreading plain was before him, and he could see the zombies in all their multitudes. “Well bollocks” drifted in through the doors just before they slammed shut with a resounding thud. NAV was amongst the dead.

Th4DwArfY1 pauses in his writing and takes a swig of his own ale, smiling fondly at the memory. Whatever else may be said, it was NAV who walked through those doors, the same as the one who I first approached with leadership. After the ale burned its track down his throat, Th4DwArfY1 turned back to his work, soiled though it was by grime and ink stains. This was the only way he could do him proud, by noting down his death. A tear rolled down his cheek to mix with the ink on the page, but he was too busy writing to notice.

A bolt was all the zombies felt as he mowed them down, the spawn of Ur fleeing from his aim. He stood above them, his crossbow unnervingly accurate. Zombies by the score were felled that day, and NAV killed more than any had though possible. With each reload of a bolt, he took a sip of beer, his own home-brew. A master beersmith to the end. Sometimes words drifted to those of us cowering on the other side of the door. “For my family”, he said with cold fury. “For my friends”, he said with unwavering hate. Each sentence he spoke was punctuated by the quickly cut off

gurgle of zombies in pain feeling the embrace of the earth once more, the husks falling as NAV's bolts pierced their foul skin. One more thing we heard before he left the high ground, his quiver out of bolts. "FOR NECROTHREAT!" The birds in the trees rose in a swarm above his head, carrion eaters sensing an easy meal on the way. For if there is one thing they have learned, it is that when a Forumite born of Necrothreat shouts those words, it means there will be death, and much of it. No ordinary force could have withstood that charge. He plunged into their ranks, grasping hands tearing at clothes as he passed, only to be beaten back by his crossbow, only to feel his wrath spent upon them. Bones broke in splinters and flew back to pierce their owners, and NAV fought with a halo of darkness rising above his head, with birds wheeling in dark patterns in the sky. These were the things that NAV saw, oldest amongst us, before he finally relented, and gave his life as forfeit to the powers that be.

And die he did. For whilst he fought unswervingly, there were always more, always more zombies. Many days he fought in the waste, arms like lead, feet shuffling in the ashen grass. He didn't give up, not even when those slain rose from the ground in front of him, behind him...even under him. No cry was given, no pleading as the tide of undead drew him under their weight. His hand rose above the tide in a final farewell, then grew limp and fell back into the writhing mass of bodies.

And NAV was no more.

At these words, Th4DwArfY1 set down his pen, his bluff features twisted in some indiscernible expression. His mouth tightened in a white line, and his craggy brow overshadowed his hooked nose. Then he began to sob, great heaving convulsions of chest and back, tears leaking out from under his eyelids and running in silver rivulets through his beard. NAV is dead. NAV was no more. The words swim in front of his eyes as Th4DwArfY1 released the sorrow of an entire nation, a nation not given to revealing anything but the strongest of feelings. And he cried, on and on, and did not stop until he was spent, weak and feeble on his bed.

### 7th of Galena

The sound of a pen scratching paper again fills his chambers, and his beard brushes on the table in front of him, only to be pushed away with a trembling hand so Th4DwArfY1 may better see what he has written. A knock sounds on the door and he frowns, casting an annoyed glance at it. A timid voice drifts through the wooden door. "S.. S...SSir? When are you going to return to your duties? Sir? We need you!" The plaintive voice of Timeless Bob falls on deaf ears, as Th4DwArfY1 returns to his page, losing himself in the elegant sweep of the pen, the smell of ink on paper.

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Today, on this the day that NAV met his doom, a feat of craftsformship unrivalled by any was under taken. The members of the fort lined the hallways, crowded the clothiers shop in which the young Forumite worked, sweat streaming down his face to mingle with his cloths. No cost was spared, the finest materials were hewn from the depths by Apiks, the gems cut to a sparkling sheen. When it was finished, held aloft triumphantly, a sigh rippled through the crowd, for with this last undertaking the memory of NAV was doomed to fade. But to this day it is said that any who wear that hat have the aim of NAV, the heart of our most venerable citizen, and it is an object more prized than the crowns of Men.

Emäthäkig, "Bandedstretched", a rope reed fiber cap

This is a rope reed fiber cap. All craftsformship is of the highest quality. It is encrusted with octagon cut green jades, emerald cut sapphires and cushion raw adamantite cabochons and encircled with bands of rope reed fiber. It is made from rope reed fiber cloth. This object is adorned with hanging rings of fire agate and menaces with spikes of rope reed fiber.

On the item is an image of forumites in clear glass. The forumites are traveling. The artwork relates to the foundation of Galleynotch by The Innocent Lancers of The Labor of Chanting in 90.

On the item is an image of Bandedstretched the rope reed fiber cap in green glass.  
On the item is an image of pear cut gems in iron.

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A fit of sorrow sweeps through the fortress, but soon is drowned in booze and alcohol. In the ancient tradition of Forumites, we drank long into the night, striving to forget his fate. It didn't work, not this time. But soon we were struck with a new sorrow, one unforeseen by any.

I went to my private study, full of sparse furnishings. My knees jarred as I half collapsed, half knelt upon the floor. I lifted my face, gasping in the fetid stench of my people. Doomed, all is doomed. Sobs wracked my body like tempestuous gales, then stop suddenly, my tear-streaked face raised in anguish towards the ceiling. All the dead flash before my eyes, the countless zombies sent against us by Fain. So many...so many. The face of Highmax looms in my mind's eye, shooting towards me with a silent scream twisting his face. Dead. NAV, dragged under by the hordes. Mastahcheese, his reindeer pulled from under him. All dead. My silent groan becomes a scream of anguish, and I leap to my feet. In my hand I hold my sword, and my fist is clenched with ferocity upon its hilt.

"WHY!!!! Why did you send these visions to me, malicious maker! Can you not love your children?!? Are you so damned that even while you made us your tool you destroy us?!" My voice fills the small room, making powerful echoes against the walls. "WHY! ANSWER ME!" the echoes grow stronger, bouncing off the walls, amplifying, turning into an ever-present buzz in my ears. "How could you let them

die?" I collapse, anger spent, upon the ground. But the buzz continues. Confused, I turn on my back and listen. It gets louder, vibrating through my head like a constant drone. With a trembling hand, I touch my face, feel the blood trickling down into my beard from my nose. The buzz stops suddenly, stopping when I wipe away the gore.

The silence before the storm.

A blast like a cannon going off sounds in my head, rocking my head back to thud against the ground. My diminutive figure bucks and twists upon the ground, but my mind is elsewhere and doesn't feel the skin being scraped on the jagged rocks of the floor. My mind is with Him. A fiery face floats before me, surrounded by darkness. The flame seems not to strive against the dark, but to merge with it in a sickening blend. The mouth moves, as I stare upon his majestic and terrible visage.

"WHY. A QUESTION I RECEIVE OFTEN. MY ANSWER IS ALWAYS THE SAME, BUG. BECAUSE I CAN. BUT LISTEN, LET US NOT ARGUE. YOU HAVE DONE ME.... SERVICE, IN THE PAST." The mouth stops moving, and the spell breaks. I look away from him and focus on the darkness, trying not to look at him directly. Before I do, I see the amused smile he displays upon remembering the torture he put me through. Curse him! "I SHALL EXACT PUNISHMENT UPON THE CAUSE OF THIS, AND SHOW YOU MY DEEP MERCY. ENJOY IT WHILE IT LASTS, FOR IT IS NOT OFTEN SHOWN. LET IT NOT BE SAID THAT ARMOK DOES NOT TAKE JUSTICE SERIOUSLY!" All lights blink out abruptly, and my mind floats in a sea of eternal blackness...descends, going downwards, drowning.

I sit up with a gasp, drawing air into straining lungs. My legs and arms are chaffed and cut by rocks, but I am alright. With an effort I heave myself to unsteady feet, tottering to a table, from which I take a white handkerchief. A drop of blood falls upon it, and I grunt. I sneeze, blood droplets spraying from me, then hastily stuff the hanky to my nose. A blood pact. My eyes widen at the significance of this, my heart beating faster with fear.

My door bursts open, throwing a straggly boy upon the floor. The crop of good Forumites is bad in Necrothreat; little sunlight leads to a bad "Harvest".

"It's back!" He gasps, terror contorting his face. "The blood demon is back!" Hastily I cross the floor and heave him to his feet, soldier's muscles easily lifting his thin frame. "What was that, fool! Tell me! What!" I couldn't control my frustration or anger, but the boy doesn't seem to find it surprising. It is what he expects of the infamous Abomination. "It's back! The blood demon, it killed him!" With that, he collapsed again, hitting the floor hard. The floor of this office has never had such activity, I thought, before the full import hit me. I stroke the puncture marks on my neck, fear clouding my mind. *It's back....*

▶ 'IronTomato' Matulstinthäd, Magnificent Bastard has been found dead, completely drained of blood!



Armok keeps his promises and revenge was meted out on the cause of NAV's death. IronTomato. He who left the doors open. RIP

### 10th Galena

One of the stranger things to happen in my many lifetimes occurred today. I was in the dining hall and drinking to drown my woe, the stress of leadership, and the fact everyone was looking at me strangely. "Foolish peasants", I mutter drunkenly into my beard, "I didn't kill him". Naturally, when it appeared that IronTomato was dead by dark arts, they suspect the Abomination. Never mind the fact that witnesses put him in his study, he was blamed. "Damn foolish peasants." I drink from my mug, rivalling NAV in my drunken ambition. The room went silent. I stood, swaying drunkenly and sloshing my beer about. "What's this!" I hollered, spittle flying from my mouth. "You lily livered bastard peasants not fit to talk in the presence of your overseer, eh?" The sneer ran off my face like water from a rock when I turned around. The Forumites were staring at something at the end of the room, not me, with awe on their faces.

The thing pulsed on the wall, a violent purple colour which made my drunken mind all the madder. Small bursts of energy shook the crowd in waves, and violet bolts of lightning flickered at the edges. The thing hovered an inch from the ground, lighter purple fading into a deep, angry red colour in the middle which swirled like molten magma. The entire room was bathed in its glow, and the crowd around it were painted in its shade. Muttering under my breath, I walk towards it, shoving citizens to the ground as I go. One boy wouldn't move, so transfixed was he, and I dealt him a boot which sent him flying across the room. As I walked on, I heard the sound of what seemed to be Timeless Bob babbling about his mother. With an oily smirk once again on my lips, I went on my way. With a well-practiced flick of my wrist, I swept my blade from its sheath. The iron was engraved with the sacred runes only Highmax knew, and as such gave the blade strength. I barely even paused to wonder why the red light highlighting the figures pulsed in time to the purple.

"Get out of my way! I yell, and a corridor opens for the Abomination. The people finally stopped gawping and moved quickly, fearful of my blade. As they should be, I think. They owe me much. I leapt onto the table nearest to the dark heathen spell, as I thought it to be, and roared a challenge into its swirling depths. No reply. I howl again, making slashing figures with my sword as the wind picks up, waving my beard in front of my face, tugging at the people's clothing. Another howl issues from me, and everything slows. The lightning at the edges extends...oh so slowly extends...towards the centre of the swirling pit of colour. They touch in the vermillion middle, and a light explodes outwards, bathing everything in its intensity.

I sit up from the floor, dazed and uncertain. My sword lies before me, and stretching I reach to pick it up. A sound of creaking mail and leather, then a studded boot slams down on it, trapping it beneath. "Some welcome," comes a voice long absent from my memory. "How fares things, Th4DwArFY1, proud overseer of this fortress." I scramble to my feet, not even bothering with the sword. It would do me no good against this

foe, expert as he is on all things bladed. My eyes gaze into the cold, cobalt depths of Highmax, and try to find some warmth there. There is none, only hard steel and...contempt. I make a noise in my throat, half fear, half irritation.

"You've come back," I say, tears from the blast of light still in my eyes. He nods gravely, moving back a step as he does so. Free of his chilling gaze for a second, I eye my blade but make no move to regain it.

"There is work to be done now that Ur lies dead. Come, I'll tell you all that has happened... Unless you wish to kick another of the civilians before we depart." His stern countenance made something in me break, and blood rushed to my face. Drawing myself upwards to my full height, I wrapped authority around myself like a cloak. The insolent pup, a mean soldier to speak in such a way to the overseer! He shall pay for this. I glare at him, and rant in his face, spitting at his feet.

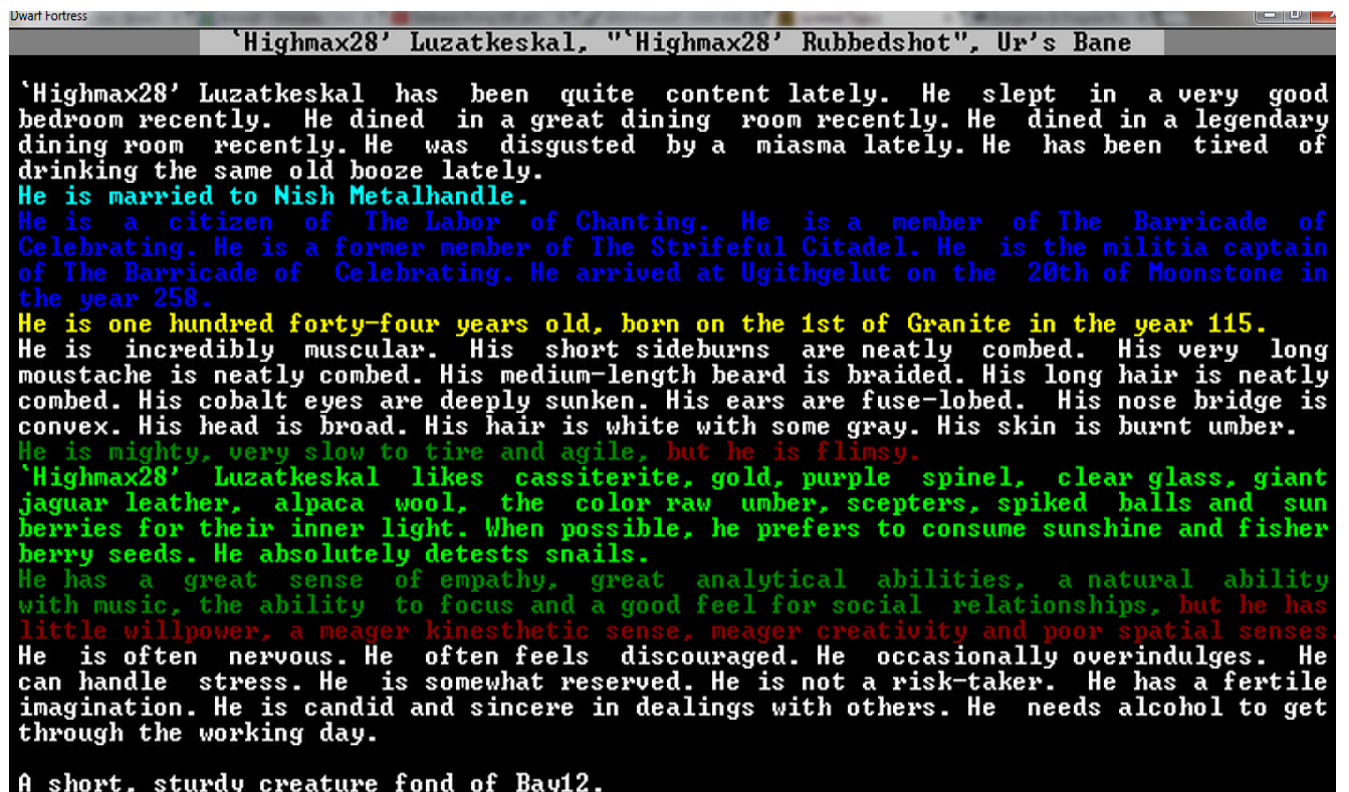
"Do I wish to boot another civilian? Well, I can if I wish to. For I wear the clothes of office, and none can strip me of my rank! You killed Ur, you say? What have you been smoking, you low-born soldier! Go to your barracks immediately, before I have you whipped at a post like the dog you are. BEGONE from my sight, wretch!" I sag, my energy spent on my tirade. The mug of ale, miraculously still in my hand, though empty, I threw at his feet, and the shards bounced off his steel boots.

He merely stared, a hint of...pity showing in his eyes. Then they hardened again into inscrutable steel, and he moved liquidly and fluidly, the Swordsman moving through forms practiced since birth. But no sword did he wield, only his hand. It was enough. More than enough. In slow motion I see his hand rise above his head, and then time asserts itself and the back of his hand is a blur that I cannot follow.

I sat up, gasping, rubbing my eyes to clear the white light crackling in my vision. Highmax stood above me, and I staggered to my feet, not willing to be seen prostrate before him. "What do you think you're doing??? GUARDS!!! DETAIN THIS MA..." his back hand takes me under the chin, and my vision wheels to encompass the ceiling before I fall to earth, a metallic taste in my mouth. His steel gauntlets cut a jagged furrow down my cheek, and blood runs down my chin. I groan, unable to sit up again, and lie there on the cold floor, with Highmax above looking down in judgement. He sits down cross legged before me and talks in a soft voice, sorrow evident in his tone.

"What has happened to you? You are not a Forumite anymore. You are what they say of you, because you believe them to be right. Abomination." I flinch, head hitting the ground, and try not to listen, to cover my ears. My arms don't seem to want to work, and I realise Highmax is holding them down with his magic. "I saw. You kicked Timeless Bob, insulted the people of Necrothreat, those you swore to uphold and protect. You have turned into an Abomination." I shake, trying not to hear, not to listen. Highmax looks down, resolute, a statue, a picture of the Forumite's who mock and disrespect me. I try to spit in his face, but all that happens is froth bubbles on my lips. "But I can make you whole again," he whispers.

Light. Sudden, blinding light. It shoots out of Highmax in multi-hued tendrils, and wraps around my legs and arms. A rainbow of light dances in my eyes, and I lose all track of time. As if through a thick jell I see the hand of Highmax slowly shoot a blazing trail towards me, red light like a comet's tail flaring our iridescently behind it. When his hand touches my forehead, I feel fire, fire like molten lava deep beneath my skin, purging me of my shame and anger. As the soothing magic of Highmax works on my troubled and grief-torn mind, I slip from the colour and into the embracing dark of sleep.



Dwarf Fortress

'Highmax28' Luzatkeskal, "'Highmax28' Rubbedshot", Ur's Bane

'Highmax28' Luzatkeskal has been quite content lately. He slept in a very good bedroom recently. He dined in a great dining room recently. He dined in a legendary dining room recently. He was disgusted by a miasma lately. He has been tired of drinking the same old booze lately.

He is married to Nish Metalhandle.

He is a citizen of The Labor of Chanting. He is a member of The Barricade of Celebrating. He is a former member of The Strifeful Citadel. He is the militia captain of The Barricade of Celebrating. He arrived at Ugithgelut on the 20th of Moonstone in the year 258.

He is one hundred forty-four years old, born on the 1st of Granite in the year 115. He is incredibly muscular. His short sideburns are neatly combed. His very long moustache is neatly combed. His medium-length beard is braided. His long hair is neatly combed. His cobalt eyes are deeply sunken. His ears are fuse-lobed. His nose bridge is convex. His head is broad. His hair is white with some gray. His skin is burnt umber.

He is mighty, very slow to tire and agile, but he is flimsy.

'Highmax28' Luzatkeskal likes cassiterite, gold, purple spinel, clear glass, giant jaguar leather, alpaca wool, the color raw umber, scepters, spiked balls and sun berries for their inner light. When possible, he prefers to consume sunshine and fisher berry seeds. He absolutely detests snails.

He has a great sense of empathy, great analytical abilities, a natural ability with music, the ability to focus and a good feel for social relationships, but he has little willpower, a meager kinesthetic sense, meager creativity and poor spatial senses. He is often nervous. He often feels discouraged. He occasionally overindulges. He can handle stress. He is somewhat reserved. He is not a risk-taker. He has a fertile imagination. He is candid and sincere in dealings with others. He needs alcohol to get through the working day.

A short, sturdy creature fond of Bay12.

## 12th Galena

With the return of Highmax the hero, indefatigable wielder of the blades, Hero of the People, the morale improved throughout the fort. In Apiks they had a sense of the old, the Elder days which gave birth to them shining forth from his eyes. In me, they found a leader and a scapegoat. Even the children revile me, undead beast that they believe me to be. But they follow when ordered, and leap to obey my commands. But these are but two points of the triangle, and the third has been vacant for far too long. Highmax is back, and in him the children see someone they can model themselves on, and the men have someone they can respect, born and forged in the fires of war as he was.

The anger in me is gone. It is not that Highmax changed me, it is more that he helped my mind struggle from the bog and be free again. I revel in the feeling of peace...while it lasts. For nothing can last forever, and my mind has often been an

unreliable place in any case. For I have been stormed by ice and fire, by the wrath of the very gods themselves. My will has been the play thing of Armok and a bug to be crushed by Fain. But I stand here in this place, and I will not fall, for with my demise they will win. A slow grin spreads across my lips, the first to grace my face since this accursed undead siege began. The Forumites around me, those that were eyeing me with fear, flinch and look away. They know what this means. They know and fear it. When Th4DwArfY1 the Abomination smiles, his enemies die. I walk away, citizens draining from the corridors before me, my mind whirling with ideas. I will not fall. Highmax has taken Ur, but I will kill the army of damned before me.

I am back in my office, and the walls warp and ooze as if the plaster had become liquid. Strange figures pressed against the bulging walls, faces struggled to become free and, failing, turned aside with a silent screech of rage. The ceiling came closer and closer. Soon I was on my back, and the ceiling hovered above my nose. It plunged downwards and engulfed me, casting my diminutive figure into a white abyss. This is travelling, the art I learned so long ago from Armok, unwittingly taught. In this ivory sea I see threads, severed from me but floating yet. Like vipers they strike, one attaching with ephemeral cords to each limb. With contempt I brush them off, for no longer am I a puppet to dance upon the strings of Armok. I gather the thwarted strands to myself, twisting them to my purpose. Like blazing lines of light, they flash before my sight, colours swirling in front of me. I try to follow one colour, but cannot. Suddenly, as if pricked by a needle, the bubble of vibrancy bursts, and I am in some other place, the sights and sounds of real life surrounding me.

The place I came to was the thing spoken of in the darkest thoughts and dreams of villains, vagabonds and idiots. There was no cohesion to the place, a landscape of muted browns then bright, intruding greens. A swamp of grey liquid stretched off to my right, the excess of some foul forge working the Light only knows where. The only thing to indicate its presence was the sound of beating, incessantly churning in the background. I follow the noise where it leads, and am spat out into a clearing. Trees with drooping, green leaves hang almost to the ground, their growth stunted despite their colour. From an excess, much like a boil, in the ground there issued forth a stream of foul lava which oozed in a winding line towards a grey anvil beside a stream. A crudely made hut of green leaves and grey wood served as shelter. The water from the river went in cheery, bright and bubbling, and was released on the other end as an almost stagnant grey discharge that slowly moved towards the swamp. The odd dead fish with flashing scales drifted amongst the grey debris of industry.

I walked towards the hut from which the noise was coming. As I approached I noticed it was bigger than I had thought, and was propped in the middle by a carved log. Faces reminiscent of those I had imagined in the walls of my office seemed to be trying to strain free, jaws frozen in eternal torment. I ignored it, for I was focused on the inhabitants, who to the man had leapt up from their squatting over a thin stream of the earth's life blood. Where it met the forge this cherry red substance hissed and steamed, and billowing clouds of dense mist rose from it. There, one of the figures plunged a lump of iron into the source of the steam, pulled it out and started hastily

beating it, lacking the expertise shown by the Forumite smithies. Seemingly unaware of me, the pale creature continued to bash the iron until a hiss from one of the others stopped it. Startled, it turned and let the partially finished sword drop to the lifeless ground.

In a deep voice I proclaimed to these green-skins, these Goblins as they called themselves, that I was here on a matter of business. One came forward, a filthy loincloth which seemed torn from the back of a wolf cinched around its emancipated waist, and said in a halting tongue "You speak of businesssss, ssstunted one? I sssay to hell with you, sscourge of our kind! I will persssoonally kill you for the glory of Armok, and recccceive my reward!" So saying, it lunged towards me. I barely blinked, and trained by Highmax as I was, easily swatted the beast aside with my sword, its body falling into the lava to twist and writhe in an agony more real than the carved pillar could ever hope to depict. I wiped my blade upon its tattered cloth just before it was consumed in fire, and in the light of my burning foe grinned at the remainder, some dozen or so, who huddled in a corner. The smell of fear seemed to pervade the fetid air, and I grinned wider and deeper, a predatory bent to my face.

"Now, friends, who wants to bargain for their very lives?" No answer came from the forgers, so I sat down and explained what was expected of them, my sword lying innocently across my legs. When I left, the hesitant sounds of forging started up again behind me, churning out weapons and armour.

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The walls gloomily surrounded me, though I knew where they would lead. All walls end, all houses cease to be, and all forts crumble to their end eventually. The mountains to nubs of their former glory are worn, rivers buck their course and run wild and free across the open plains. There is only one true constant in this world of ours, and that is the people. While fire like hail would rain from the sky and seas may bubble, the Forumites will drink ale, slaughter puppies and cats and tear asunder the very earth. Fiery rain? Dig deeper. Rising tsunamis of endless seas, come to drench your land? A trivial matter solved with a gate and digging deeper. This is the logic with which the gods will war. This is what I am. And by the fire wreathed beard of Armok, I would have those gods break their teeth upon our spirits!

The dark ahead roiled and turned with monstrous, imagined shapes. I was fairly certain they were illusions sent by Armok, or at the least the sign my mind had broken under the pressure. Either way, I ignored them as petty and got on with the task at hand. I strode forward towards the wall of midnight and broke through, the shadows fleeing from my touch. I did not believe this to be my mind, for it held horrors far more deadly and monstrous than any conjured before me, and I had long mastered them. No flame-dripping Yak was seen to smite the ground in front of me, no death and servitude to Armok portrayed before my eyes; these were still inside. It

must be Armok's work. The bubble bursts and I was released into a land of light and fluffy clouds, rolling pastures and a peaceful river meandering through all. This is what Necrothreat should be, but closer inspection showed the lie. What at first seemed like the bleached limbs of trees were in actuality the grasping ribs of beasts and men, those too broken and shattered to be used by the dreaded children of Ur. And there they were. In the grass, hiding in groves of trees, their gruesome faces twisted in hatred of life itself. Accursed beasts. *They will die soon*, I remember thinking at the time. *Their bones will join their dead brethren*. A long shot. I knew it even at the time, but still I gave the order, and white smoke boiled upwards to mar the sky; a signal.

Moments passed. Then, from amongst the grasses finally regrown from the no-longer burning fires, there came a green tide. The Goblins held to their word. I grinned as the zombies were hacked and hewn by ambush after ambush, the slow-witted surprise on their faces comical in its stupidity. I threw back my head and laughed, long and loud, true belly mirth. The sky above was blue; the grass below was red. Finally, the Forumites got revenge. Finally, we show our mettle. Finally, the dead stay dead, for there are more blades than they can withstand. A Goblin is struck down, then rises again as an even fouler enemy. Spurred into action, the remaining zombies launch a shambling attack, for the first time distracted from the in-fighting that came when Ur was killed by Highmax. The Necrothreaders each strove to gain his Midnight Throne, and claim his tower for their own; it seems they are finally unified under one front. The zombies pull down more and more, until finally all invaders are amongst their ranks.

**An ambush! Curse them!**

Th4DwArfY1 sets down his pen, leaning back in his chair. His hand hurts from the writing and his throat is as dry as the parchment, ink spattered as it was, that lies before him. The white space at the bottom beckons him, and he longs to continue his chronicle. But calls of the body intrude, and he takes a long draught of his ale. The last of the Great NAV stock of 59; its value amongst Forumites is nigh priceless. The flavour, as with most brews, is like the earth's blood being poured down your throat. But oh, what vibrancy, what life! His hands ink-stained and shaking, he sets down his flask and eats a plump helmet stew, the stringy mushroom hard and unyielding, then finally being crushed and defeated in his mouth. Around his room there were now engravings, scenes of battles he longed to forget. Strengthening his back-bone he stands up, unsteady on his feet. He goes to his chamber door, trembling hand reaching for the handle; duty beats all, even fear. But then his gaze goes back to the page, to the chronicle he was writing, and a thought foreign to his race enters into his head; who will remember me? The true me, what I really think and feel. Not the rumours and legends, but the actual truth, something generations can pore over and say "There stood Th4DwArfY1, Highmax; Wielder of Blade and Flame, Apiks;

Forumite of the days of dawning and the beginning of the God War, Elephant Parade, the Wolf-Man Ruhn, Mastahcheese the great Reindeer Tamer, NAV the brewer and Warrior of the First Class, and many others which stretch back into a long line of bravery, nobility and power. Who will remember us? A new duty occurs to him, and his hand falls limp at his side. Grimly he turns his back on the fort and picks up his pen; *We deserve to have a place in history, and I will get that for us, or I will subject myself to the blades of Sprin!*

Ten ambushes came that day, and ten were repulsed. I recall that the blood was indeed like a river, and our foes numbers increased. I also remember that I did not care, for that was but part of my plan; a test, of sorts. We now knew how organised they were, and we could develop a plan. I walked back into the fort, and the shade like fell wings again closed about the Abomination, cloaking him in their terror and inky shape.

### 17th Galena

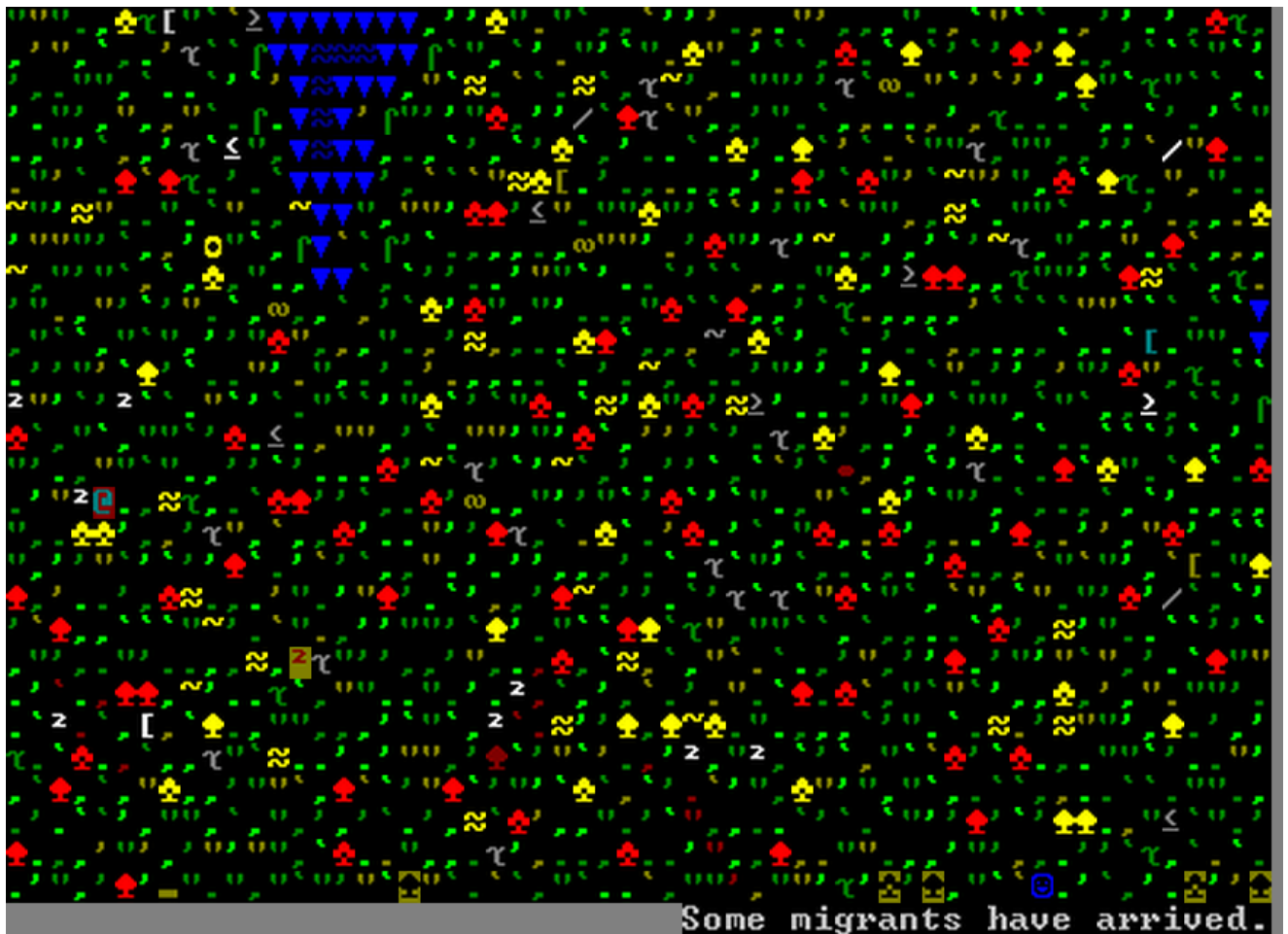
Quiet contemplation of Necrothreat. Something I never thought to be able to have-not without the sight of zombie scum distorting the picture. But there I was, standing at a window with the bracing wind gusting through the engraved corridors, my beard and hair being tugged and pulled at in the icy gusts. The sun glinted on the river, a gleaming line of silver which shone as if burnished. The clouds, low in the sky, seemed to be brooding over the earth in their own thoughts, sometimes grey with worry, and others light, fluffy and free. The trees like beacons flame with autumnal colours, and strewn upon the grass-cloaked earth they toss their flaming leaves like so many burning sparks. The ponds and pools stare at the clouds, and small animals have a free run on the land. But so do they. Always present, always waiting. Amongst their rotten company I see the green faces of goblins, their shapes distorted by the Fell powers of Ur's Generals, and their allegiances no longer lying with the living.

I feel no guilt in leading them to this; their death protects Necrothreat, for unlike the zombies they were intelligent in their own crude way, and it was only a matter of time before their foul forge began churning out siege weapons. No, they served us more amongst the dead. But what crushed me, nearly driving me to despair, is what happened to those fleeing from their own ruin. We were the last. We were all. Word from new arrivals had shown us that all forts had fallen, apart from the pitiful smoking wreck of a once great Mountainhome. The dead take over the halls of the living and tear them down, gradually, brick by brick. Once great bridges which spanned rivers as if merely leaping gracefully from bank to bank, glowing golden as the sun strikes their filigree hand rails, are strewn in the waters, the light in them dimmed, as if a cloud were intruding on their lustre. The walls which enclosed entire fortress lands are breached, those pieces remaining standing broken, like so many crumbling teeth not yet aware that they are doomed to fall. Ruin, all is ruin. Except Necrothreat. And here we must hold. That is why the migrants are so important; they are the remnant of a remnant, mere shadows of our former glory, but coming in one shape we may gain our might again and be shadows no more. We need the migrants but few get



through.

They came earlier today, a pitiful straggling line of morose, down turned faces. The dirt was engrained into their skin, so much so that no soap or water would wash it out. Lank locks of filthy hair hung about them like curtains, and even their beards were untrimmed, un-braided and in disrepair. Truly, our civilization is crumbling for us to appear as this; no ale, no good hearted joking and jests. No laughter rose from the thin line. It said something that they came here. That they came to Necrothreat, the last bulwark of the Forumites, meant that they had embraced their deaths. I grunted. So it must be, for if we are to live we must have no fear of dying.



### 24th Sandstone

I stood upon the highest level of Necrothreat, that place where the walls of stone engraved with our glories and woes had petered out and become soft, sodden walls of mud. An earthy smell hung over everything, and water dripped in endless drops from the ceiling. There, through an expertly fashioned window in the hill, I had a view of the migrants. They walked drearily towards the gates, heads down, eyes on the

ground. They never even noticed the waves of zombies around them, and nor did the zombies seem to notice them. Then a single wail ululated in the still morning air and the corpses shook off the stupor of the dead, and looked about the land of the living. The dead charged, and hit them as a wave envelops a rock.

They stood firm, these dregs of society. Beaten, tortured by circumstance, punished merely for being born into a world the dead had set their eyes upon, they stood. Blood ran with the mud down their faces, and they had no weapons. Again and again one of their family, a friend or relative, would fall to the clutching hands of the dead, a thin wail torn from their mouths before they fell to embracing darkness, succumbing to the inevitability of their doom. All dead, now. All but one.

He watched as his brethren were cut down like wheat about him. To this day, I fancy that I heard him shout out as the last was cut down, and he was the only remaining migrant. What he said, I do not know, but I like to think that he cursed the dead, screamed his fury at them. A leatherworker, he had never known war before, but in this day and age all knew the dead. He knew he could not win. He knew he would die. And so he ran, a storm of undeath brewing behind him, dark shapes darting through the grass. Then gate was seen, microcline and blue, in his path. As he crossed it slammed shut with finality, cutting off the screams of hate that followed him. He was safe. Atis the Leatherworker had made it to his new home.



## 16th Timber

Amidst the ruins of a shattered civilization, a flame yet dwells. There strength and glory reside, the bracers of our mind set, of our spirit. None can take it; none can quench it. Like a mighty river of flowing ire and bravery, it is a molten rock ever present in our minds. One that occasionally explodes in a kaleidoscope of colours, ranging from brilliant gold to peaceful blue. All have this possibility, this gem inside them. Only a few ever reveal it, experience its brilliance first hand. Highmax is one, an exceptional one. He mastered the art of controlling this inner force long ago. Apiks is another, his memories of the Elder days and the First Necrothreat reinforced by this power. For all others, this ability manifests itself as a mood of sorts. Dorisdorf is one such.

It happened quickly. One minute he sat at his station, churning out crafts in the bowels of the earth, the next he was standing up, every muscle in his body straining. Sweat gleamed on his forehead and ran in small rivulets down his cheeks. As quick

as a dart, he dashed off, screaming for materials. He came back to his workshop, a mechanics shop near the forges, and began to beat, the hammer falling steadily. From his shop came a coruscating river of sparks, and shouts fell and powerful, imbued with the ancient power of the Forumites, rang forth, echoing, bouncing with frenzied speed in that hollowed cavern beneath the earth.



To pounding of the fire smiths,  
In depths which held the ancient light,  
There Dorisdorf began his craft  
Beneath the mountain's height.

He smote the ore and lit the forge,  
His arms were strong, his hammer fell  
Amidst the fiery hail of flame  
In caverns deep beneath the fell.

His eyes in darkness lit with light,  
And in the dark a wondrous sight  
To him was shown, and him alone,  
Sat down his hammer in the night.

He wandered long in eldritch halls,  
And went through hill and Elder door.  
He saw there coal in veins of pitch.  
Amazed, he whispered "Nokzam Othor!"

Then hewn from rock was darkling vein  
And carried was its precious load  
To shop above the magma sea  
Where imps abide in molten hold.

Long spent he inside his shop,  
And long was heard his mighty roar,  
Until the day the forger stopped  
And left that place for evermore.

An engineer was he when all was done,  
He set aside his hammer's weight,  
But in his eyes there gleamed with light  
A hope, a hunger none could sate.

And yet he walks our hallowed halls,  
In Necrothreat he dwells today,  
And legends spring about his work,  
His crafts recalled in song and lay.

### 6th Moonstone

Dorisdorf yet raved in the darkest depths of the world. The walls, like rock and earthen curtains, swept by me with such speed that I barely noticed them. It had struck again, that plague which laid low our greatest warriors, which put even me under the thumb of Armok, that terrible entity which all curse in their darkest moments and most cursed of days. Blood fiend. Vampire. An evil which feasts upon blood for the glory of Armok, but which is also undead. Unswervingly loyal to the blood god, and yet with a tie to Ur...none can say what they will do, how they will do it. The corridor petered out and became a one-man tunnel, ending in a bedroom. The Bane of IronTomato struck here for the second time. I entered through a door ripped and hewn by supernatural strength, deep gouges marred the surface as if a clawed beast had ripped at it in an animalistic fashion. Stepping through this warped door frame, I stood in shock. The walls here were far from nondescript. The blood was spattered upon them in large wheels, spraying up to the ceiling seven feet above. It was as if someone had taken joy in bathing the room red. I recall shuddering and, remembering my own experience with the blood-fiends, believing that this was very well possible. It was at this moment the shadows struck, a moment of confusion within my mind as I sought to block out the room...and the body.

From the blood drenched floor and crimson hued walls they came, a tide of unquenchable darkness which seemed to stretch back into the most unfathomable depths of my mind. I fell into a sticky puddle, hands smeared red in front, the tightened, whitened knuckles showing through like bones. Like death itself. Armok never ceases to torment me. Never. His will bends towards me at all times, seeking, seeking to drag me under and suffocate me in fetid swamps of darkness. But I will not drown! Let the blood god play his tricks! Let the very mountain shake with his fury! I am a FORUMITE! At the last my body trembled, spasming in the blood and torn body parts. I rejected him that day. I fought of the shadow. But it took will. A lot of

will. Even to this day, I remember how I had huddled in a corner, rocking back and forth, images of bloodsucking beasts dancing in front of my vision until they began to fade.... fade into the depths of my mind, where I kept them, mastered them and beat them. I won, and only occasionally do I see that wall of midnight before me, only at certain times such as the darkness of the moon do I feel cold, sliding hands reaching down my back. And I know that somewhere Armok still waits for me, and he has an eternity. I only have this life, but I shall make it a life that will make the very gods weep rivers of blood!

→Kogan Lisididen, Mechanic has been found dead, completely drained of blood!

On the same day, as I stumbled, blood crazed and shaken, covered in the tattered remnants of clothing that I had torn in my horror and grief, we got a new mechanic to replace the old. I smiled a crimson grin, the white of my teeth shining through. The Light has a strange humour, does it not? I laughed, a touch of hysteria entering my tone, then walked to my chambers amidst the sound of people chanting and celebrating. "All hail Dorisdorf! Legend of his craft! May his life long be held in the chronicles of time!"

'Dorsidwarf' Abandurad, High Master Derailer has created Nokzam Othör, a bituminous coal mechanisms!

Press Enter to close window

## 2nd Opal

Solon, Maiden of the Spear, crusher of zombies and saviour of the halls marched to war today, much in the manner that the greats before her had gone, in cases such as NAV and Highmax. Her spear sisters beat the hide of their shields, and on the ground was strewn the shafts of many spears. A last rite. The last honour afforded to the dead by the living. She continued her march, not pausing, like so many other brave souls before her. The sun glinted on her red hair, making it seem to be fire, embers of ruby hue flickering on her head. Then the doors slammed shut, cutting off our view, and she was in that barren wasteland cleared by NAV, the no man's land which no zombie dared inhabit. The fortifications were kept by a band of ravenous, undead dogs, the result of some previous overseer's folly, and I could not get to them. I used a window instead, and this is what I saw.

Across the rolling plains I saw her go, her spear at her side, a line of silver clenched in her gleaming iron-clad hand. Around her there were tall, many froned plants still glistening in the morning light. She brushed them aside, steely grey eyes fixed on the neat horizon, on that darkling tide which writhed upon the shores of the river, across a microcline bridge. The blue of the stone and river contrasted strikingly with that fearsome host, and even from inside the walls we heard the sound of guttural singing, threaded through with much gulping and slopping. The sounds only the decayed can hope to achieve. The noise, what no doubt they thought to be music, crept down my spine in icy rivulets, and I fancied I saw those midnight wings again on the edge of my vision; I shook my head, and they dispersed as if made of morning mist.

Come, O come down deep beneath  
The earth there lies a wormy place  
Where roots protrude and dead things sleep;  
Oh, deep beneath the earthen face!

Solon strode on, weathering the crude singing as if it were a gale and she a single spark flying into the depths of its fury. Her hair burned, though no sun shone upon it. The undead in their masses perked up, straining at the banks, trying to reach her. Grubby, decomposing hands reached across, and fell, flopping, into the flowing rivers. And still she went on, and the dead grinned and gnashed their teeth, all the while gurgling and snorting in a bestial manner.

You come to meet us, ha ha ha,  
You come to greet us in our home  
Where roots are wound throughout the ground  
And light is pale as deathly bone.  
Oh, ho ho ho  
Ho ho

The river fierce betwixt us flows and writhes  
But soon you'll meet us here at last  
Forgetting then your ancient fort  
And all you did in times long past.

Oh, come at last to have repast  
Beneath the grass and rolling field  
Oh come to sleep, then rise again  
To find your woe and sorrows healed.  
Solon! Solon! Maiden!  
Join us here where light has fallen!

This eerie chant echoed up to my ears and brought to mind death and doom, as Solon must surely fail in the face of such a maelstrom. She stopped once, at the foot of the bridge, then leapt across, her spear extended, a deadly dart; a thorn in the side of Ur. Her crutch she also brought, as she could not walk without it, and in the very

heart of that midnight tide she whirled and hacked at the dead, no longer singing, but fearful. The crutch hit them resounding blows, and the spear was a line of death which none dared cross. From my vantage point I saw her clear a space, her crutch as much a weapon as her spear. Only Solon, I thought, could make a wound a benefit. I stood, open mouthed, at this display of fighting, of Forumite bravery, which lasted long into the day, the night and the day after. Not even Highmax, gifted though he was, could have beaten her in a fight; such was her unimaginable prowess.

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-ashen crutch-  
  
This is a well-crafted ashen crutch.  
  
Four Kills  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Rinsequills the Problematic Blockade of Walks the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Perishivory the zombie forumite, d. 259  
Furboulder the Random Truss the zombie haxxor, d. 259  
  
Slayer  
Solon Prairiewheels the Adorable Frost of Raptors the forumite, four kills
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### 3rd Opal

No zombie dared approach that flaming brand of life. No un-dead beast sank its claws into her. A wall of blackness grew and grew, one not even my eyes could pierce, and all I could see was the gleam of her spear, the flash of her hair. Then all stopped. The dead trembled, as if a leash had been fastened around their necks and tugged. Their moaning subsided, the walls receded, and I could see her again. She was panting, her sweat smearing her face. The old wound of her leg had opened, and blood trickled in red rivers down her crutch. The zombies looked on hungrily, trembled once more, then withdrew. A large circle had opened around her, and then I saw something which shocked me.

From the fetid, stinking mass came a human, tall and gangly, his lank hair plastered on his face. He seemed uncertain, and he glanced from side to side as if worried of the slaving beasts surrounding him, then quickly strode forward. His words carried far, back up to me, as he addressed Solon in booming tones; a safe distance from the undead, I noticed. "Lady! Wielder of the Spear! Maiden! Join our ranks, and you shall be rewarded by my..." He choked, as if the words coming out of him were foreign and disgusting on the tongue "Fair lady. Come, join us!"

Solon looked up between her strands of hair, glaring at this aspect of life before her, and said nothing. Her lips were sealed in a tight, white line of hatred. Her spear glowed like quicksilver, and the man stumbled back at its fury, shielding his eyes.



Averting his gaze from the figure of white and red, he turned his head to the side and shouted in. "Lady!" Again his face tightened with distaste, "She will not come!" He then subsided, and stood, and waited. Another human came and stood before the first, this time in a tattered uniform. The uniform of Ur's highest generals. Solon stayed as she was, not moving, the ring of foul darkness on all sides swaying and moaning as the breeze does in tall, fair trees which stand sentinel on the lowly graves of Man, Elf, and Forumite. From this breathless wheeze came the sound of words, shaped and dropped into the air like stones into a dark, dreary pool. The zombies continued to sway, but began to part in a seam down the middle, a lone figure making its way towards the centre, towards Solon.

"Sssshe comessss, she comessss, she comes to sssteal your sssoul,  
Your flesh, she'll rip, your faccce, she'll tear-apart  
And nooone, can sssave, your petty role  
Within this placce she'll eat your beating heart!

As this new creature came ever closer the music gained more substance, with less windy, insubstantial noises, and more certainty. The dead roiled around her bubble of calm.

She comes! Her dress is silver, black and fair,  
And in her hand she bears a bony rod  
That she holds high in fist of steel  
Above the ground and grave strewn sod.

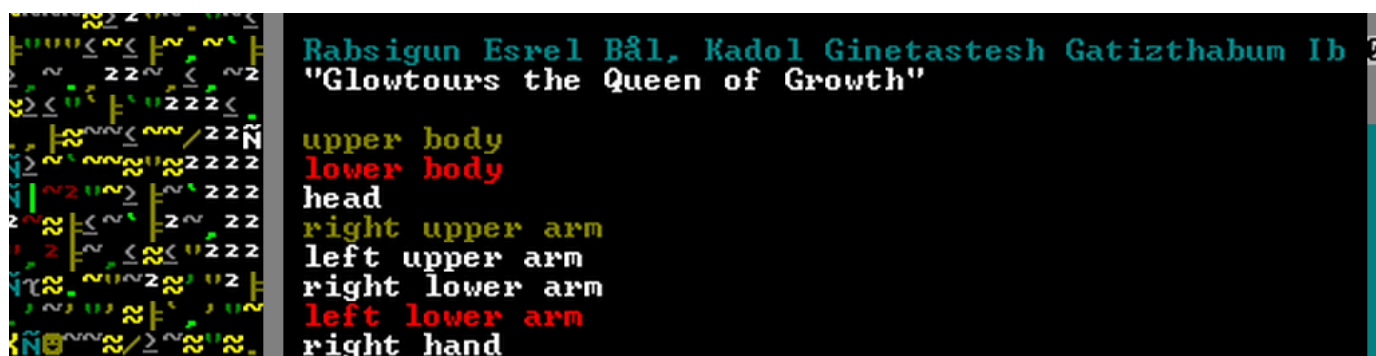
The whispering lyrics faded back into the rustling of leaves on the ground and again the zombies grunted and howled. The figure stood before Solon, and as the song had said her dress was black, shot through with threads of silver embroidery. No doubt the takings from some rich noble woman, or perhaps it was her original dress; for yes, the creature was a she, and in her hand she held a sceptre of bone, fashioned crudely into a parody of nobility and royalty. The face was fair, with silver hair to match Solon's red in intensity, and her high cheekbones gave her face a strange, exotic tilt. But the flesh was rotten, the dress was wrinkled and frayed and her show of power rang false. She had but one eye, a bloody pulp which moved in small, jerking movements. She was one of the dead, but she stood in front of the two generals who flanked her in their faded uniforms. They cringed when she looked upon them, grovelling before her.

Her mouth opened, and a long wheeze came out, a groaning, creaking sound reminiscent of the noise made by rusted hinges forced to open. The chin sagged down and hit her chest, barely held to her face by decayed ropes of muscle which lay in red slimy lines across the pearly bone. The creaks changed to half-formed words, and the words into sentences as it began to speak. Its hand clenched the white sceptre as Solon's clenched her spear.

"I am Glowtours the Queen of Growth! I am the future of this land. Bow now before me, and you may keep your meaningless life; if you will but serve my cause." Solon

stood up straight and spat at her feet, the glob of spittle flying to hit the beast on the leg. The "Queen" trembled with impotent fury, and she raised her staff as if to strike Solon down. Her single eye quivered frantically, and she began to twitch furiously as she lowered the sceptre. "Join me!" She hissed, fury causing her grasp of language to fade. "You will join me in death if not in life! I am all powerful!" Her tone dropped to a sibilant, convincing whisper. "You need not fear death, for my servants" her head jerked sharply to the left and right, indicating the two humans on either side of her. Her hair fell in a curtain, but not silver now-it seemed lank, and strands fell slowly, winding towards the ground- "My servants will raise you again. Everlasting life, Solon, in which to do good! Join me!"

Solon spoke for the first time, her face twisted in disgust at the being she was addressing. Its silver hair hid the worst of the decay, but she knew it was there. "No."



The jaw drops low, lower than ever before. Flesh hung like shreds of pale, fleshy worms down the side of her face, and tendons bulged and writhed beneath the thin, waxy skin. It lunged, all pretence at nobility discarded, and at her back and sides her army poured inwards. Solon stood grim faced to meet the tide.

The queen struck, and blood spurted in a sickly fountain, for her back was torn apart. A crunch was heard, and Solon screamed out in pain, falling twitching to the ground. She never again used her legs, and her spine stuck from the flesh on her back like pale, blood slick mountain ridges. Her yells echoed in the meadows of Necrothreat, a shout of stricken woe torn from her throat. The dress of black and silver flowed around her in a dizzying blend, and tears stood out in her eyes. In the mud she cried, the triumphant queen standing over her.

The beast kicked her hand, and her buckler, crutch and spear whirled out of her loose grasp to fall in mud as their mistress did. Solon wailed, the pain insignificant when compared to losing her weapons, and writhed in pain as the dead swarmed around, tearing her flesh in long, gleaming strips and feasting on her body. The sun began to set and lent its ruddy glow to the macabre scene of Solon, maiden fair, lost in a sea of her own blood. For a day they feasted on her flesh, and for a day she clung to the very edge of life, not giving her body up to the darkness that the Queen now seemed to control. No peace. She screamed again as her lung is ruptured, and blood spurted in an oozing line from her scored and scratched chest. Red-stained

bile trickled from her mouth to pool on her shredded chest, and the Queen's mouth, stuck in a rictus grin, was stained crimson. Solon closed her eyes and drifted, dreaming of a land where pain does not exist.

The Forumites were horrified but unable to help; we could only squat and watch, as usual. It churned the bile to see another hero suffer at the hands and claws of such evil, but walls cold and high stood between us and Solon, the sufferer in the mud.

```
<bronze buckler>
-ashen crutch-
+iron spear+
Dead Birch Sapling
A spattering of Solon Prairi
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Solon Lâvenkol Salirnisgak R
"Solon Prairiewheels the Ado

upper body
lower body
head          Winded
right upper arm
left upper arm
right lower arm
left lower arm
right hand
left hand
right upper leg
left upper leg
right knee
left knee
right lower leg
left lower leg
```

Still, after a day she clung on to life, though her injuries were grave. The Queen herself bit Solon in the hand, the teeth still hard after death neatly slicing through bone and sinew. Solon lost a hand.

Solon Lâvenkol Salirnisgak R 2  
"Solon Prairiewheels the Ado

upper body  
lower body  
head Winded  
right upper arm  
left upper arm  
right lower arm  
left lower arm  
right hand  
left hand  
right upper leg  
left upper leg  
right knee  
left knee  
right lower leg  
left lower leg

right knee  
left knee Winded  
right lower leg  
left lower leg  
right foot  
left foot  
left lung  
liver  
spleen  
left shoulder  
upper spine  
second finger,  
fourth finger,  
right false rib

right knee  
left knee Winded  
right lower leg  
left lower leg  
right foot  
left foot  
left lung  
liver  
spleen  
left shoulder  
upper spine  
second finger,  
fourth finger,  
right false rib

iron helm  
\*iron mail shirt\*  
x<cave spider silk left glove  
x<pig tail fiber sock>x  
-iron high boot-  
-pig tail fiber shirt-  
-iron chain leggings-  
Solon Lâvenkol Salirnisgak R  
Dead Birch Sapling  
A pool of Solon Prairiewheel

Stars filled her closed eyes towards the twilight of the day, and she drifted in comfort at last with NAV, and countless aspects of Former Forumites freed by Highmax's benevolence. Her body shuddered and rose, but Solon was free, in that place which none bound to Necrothreat can achieve; the Light.

The bells of doom are ringing forth,  
The vales and hills are shrouded black;  
The hillsides weep in tears of tar  
For she is gone and lost, alack!

Her spear was bright beneath the sun  
And moon was paled before her shield.  
The shadows, chased, were fearful then  
Before her fate, alas, was sealed.

The hordes appeared to steal her soul,  
Her shield it shone, her spear aglow,  
She smote them down, and killed them all  
But undefeated was her foe.

The river wept in tears of gold  
Beneath the sun and turquoise sky,  
And trembling mountains shook and cried;  
Their snowy tears were seen on high.

They came again to wreak their wrath  
Upon the Maiden, Solon Fair,  
So on she fought in light and dark  
Where evil dwelt and made its lair.

Before her eyes there flashed the scene  
Of youthful days when she did war  
In days and times already been  
And places lost to ancient lore.

A strike! A hurt! A burning wound,  
Her back ablaze was set with pain  
And fall she did amongst the dead,  
Her muddy face was washed by rain.

A torrent fell, it smote her down  
To lie upon that sodden ground,  
The drops in eyes became a stream,  
Like tears—she cried with ne'er a sound.

Her doom! Her doom it was to die;  
But soon she'll walk inside our hall,

Her spear agleam beside her shield;  
The mighty live to never fall!

As Th4DwArfY1 writes the last line of the song sung of Solon, a single, crystalline tear leaks from between his closed eyelids and falls, gleaming, to strike the page; a perfect, sorrow-filled pool on paper. "Another gone," he moans between clenched teeth. Another soul lost to the armies of Ur.

## 12 Felsite

The need for wood compelled me. The stocks we had were lasting alright, but for my Great Plan, I needed more. Always more. I walked to the pastures and saw the saplings striving through the mud and cave moss. Not enough. It would never be enough. And so my sights were set lower, to the dankest and most deep of the caves. The battle for the depths had begun, and though I did not know it at the time, I was interfering with forces more dangerous than even the Undead Armies of the Queen.

The men reported to me that only two watchers were in the depths, and one was Osta, the pink jackal. I snorted with derision, for I recalled what one unnamed soldier drew up- a pink, fluffy dog. And so we marched, the Legion of Necrothreat, and had sneers on our faces. Our men descended, leaving behind the smoothed walls and joining with rough, primal stone. We were in the lowest levels of Necrothreat. At my call, which reverberated in the still, stagnant air, the bridge was lowered. Through that dim, shrouded tunnel there was an open space which even the keenest eyes couldn't pierce. The men grew agitated and uneasy, mumbling among themselves about magics older than time itself. And then it came, the jackal we sneered at, Osta the Fuzzy Wolf. We later named him Osta the Destroyer, and children tell tales of him in the dark, accompanied by the flickering light of a candle and sharp, jagged intakes of fearful breaths.

By the time he appeared, I was not there. My duties had called, and my Great Plan needed immediate attention. And so I left them, and for that reason alone I did not die, but lived to hear of the account from the one survivor. There is not a night that goes by that I wish I was with them in their final hours, that I suffered the same as them. Yet another burden to carry. Yet another thing to crush me. This is what happened.

Sodel came to me. His face was strained and gaunt, and his crossbow was still in his hand, though all his bolts were spent. I gave a grunt of appreciation-he had fought as long as he could. The beasts in the depths, he said, had come. Two of them, never meant to make it past the first line of the Legion. Bolts had rained like sleet upon them, but had struck harmlessly in their fur and hide, falling to the ground. None had laughed at the wolf's pink coat, for it was stronger than the finest steel. Sodel sat in a waiting chair, face trembling and slack. He seemed to be talking less because I had ordered a report, and more because he simply could not stop. I had seen that look

before, had faced such sights myself. It was a mark in his favour that he had managed to come at my asking.

A deep, shaking breath was drawn in before he continued. I learned how in the face of beasts shaped like twisted, huge jackal-men, our Forumites had battled on. They fought with tooth and nail, but that Jackal was impervious. One beast was driven back, but Osta remained to sweep aside his foes; all normal life he seemed to hate, and his appearance meant death. In the thick of the battle, when things may have turned in our battle, Osta the Destroyer let loose a roiling cloud of smoke which wreathed our men like ghosts in its embrace. The men went on, but slower, less determined. Sodel got a nose bleed, then a sheen of blood dripped with his sweat from his brow. Soon, the corridor was taken and then the main stair, and no force remained. The blood was running in rivers through the engravings, and hewn and torn corpses littered the stairs like so many discarded toys.

And then it happened.

The jackal, seeing his last opponent before him-Here, Sodel took a deep drink from the cup I provided before continuing- rose to his full height. He was pink no more, for he was drenched in gore, and his teeth shone jaggedly through a veil of blood. He reeked of death. Of hate. And then he howled, oh how he howled! A sound to rival the screech of hordes of bats blended with hounds on the hunt. He bayed and roared, shrieked and screamed. Sodel had taken the chance to escape, and slipped down the stairwell towards the freedom; the forges. But not before he saw what had happened.

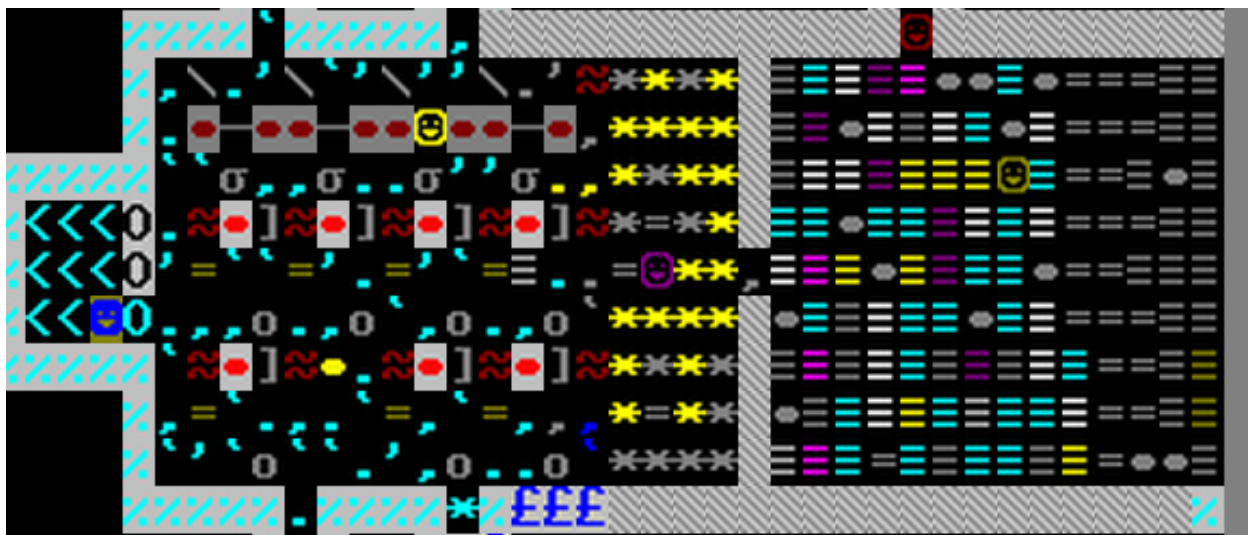
In the caverns, they had amassed. One by one. Ever silent, ever watchful. Waiting for the chance that they may boil from beneath the earth and into the world of light and sun, to extinguish every living thing that lived with joy. A force more evil than Armok, for it was older and purposeless. A force more inexplicable than Ur, for they were alive and had no reason to hate the living. As pus from a sore comes, they came. Teeth, fur, claw. Twisted into humans, beasts of lizard-ilk, wolf-ilk and any creature imaginable. A rolling tide, they came to kill us all.





I was in the forges, helping Highmax with the construction of the iron parts needed for the Great Plan. We had heard the noise, heard the roar of beast and the death screams of men. The Abomination ordered the wall closed in and the hatches locked at the top while I sobbed inside. The lever was pulled, and the caverns were sealed; no beast but Osta the Destroyer was left, and he was speeding downwards.

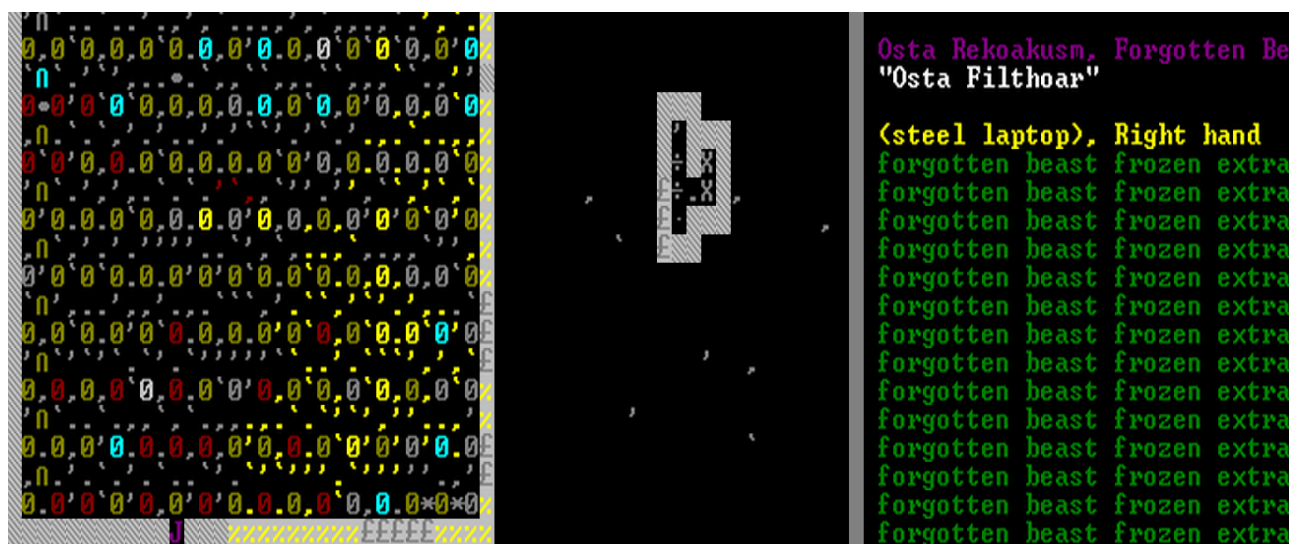
A noise came of scuffling shoes and panting breathes. The last brick was getting closer. A shaky figure came through the last hole, crawling, bleeding, crying. The dust had nearly killed him. But he had lived to tell me what had happened, and was made the commander of our Crossbowforumites. The Great Plan must continue. No beast can stand in the way. I am glad there was a survivor; but had he been seconds later I would have left him to the grisly death of his companions. So says I, Abomination of Necrothreat, and I mean it. Life fashions people into stone or they are crushed.



I.... felt a pull at this time. My soul seemed to waver, like a candle in the wind. I heard the voices of heroes long dead, of the First Forumites who made this fort. Even the will of Armok had not had this effect, this draw on me. I saw through the eyes of them all, starting with Apiks the Founder and going forward. Their graves rose before my eyes in long, silent lines long swallowed by the earth. Their coffins are almost beyond count. My mind shoots across them all, seeing the blinding flashes of their lives, their voices still calling, still whispering. Leading me, I realise. In a crescendo of wailing and noise I arrive where they wanted me, my mind slamming against a far greater being, a foreign consciousness so like a beast it almost made no difference. Before me they appeared, a line of spectres. They needed my help, I realised dumbly. They needed me. And so I helped. Their ghostly fingers stretched out and I grabbed hold of them with fingers as frail as theirs. The dead and living working in unison. Ur would not have believed it.

They shot lines of power into me until I felt the great burden of my life lift, and my

being restored to its proper glory. Temporary, I knew, but the power I bore at that time could have levelled mountains. Such is the force of the dead. With my spark at the head, the dead remoulded the Jackal, that vast and primal consciousness, into something of our liking. They threw glistening, silver hooks and lines to restrain it, catching it and pulling, and I organised, adding my own power and strength to theirs. The beast's mind shuddered, and a howl shook the earth. The graves were tossed like stones, coffins bashing one against the other before resting back into their place. The dead did not falter, and nor did I. In this web of light, we caught it, made it more the Avatar of the dead, and stationed it at the entrance of the graves with a laptop awaiting to be used in the hands of the Forgotten Beast, forever guarding their rest in the depths of the world, forever defending their slumber. With a sigh, they let me go. Their eyes spoke of thanks as I drifted from them into a deep, pearly sea of my own being. When I awoke, I was the same, and yet different...my heart felt lighter. A parting gift from the dead for giving them the Jackal Defender of the Tombs, Osta the Destroyer.



### 17th Malachite

Amidst the tales of woe and death, of the unmarked graves of fallen soldiers and the marked graves of our heroes, new life was ushered into the world. Hail to the Child of Sulin! Long live the Maiden's Leader! Stale tradition was cast out the door in the face of such celebration, and Sulin was allowed to keep her child with minimal grumbling from the Aiel. The Fort watched as she shed the only tears she has ever been seen to shed then or since.

**'Sulin' Katcerol Kebul Tabar, Maiden Leader has given birth to a girl.**

## 20th Sandstone

Apiks left the fortress. The Great, the Elder, the Lore knower. He left as NAV had done, as Solon had done, as Highmax had done. The names of dead Forumites. His footsteps had struck echoes in the tunnel, and the children watched agape as the reclusive miner left through the newly mined entrance he himself had hewn from the turf. Mother's came and ushered them inside, for all knew what would happen. The sorrow was heavy in the air and crackled in the chambers and halls. A sigh, a whisper, wove through the fort. Apiks has gone. Apiks has left. Our hero has gone! None could stop him, and his silhouette blocked the light as he exited. Only I knew his true purpose. Only I knew why he went outside. He was saying goodbye to Necrothreat, goodbye to the green and vibrant land he himself had almost single-handedly dug from the cold, clammy mud. I understood, for I was filled with sadness. Only I knew what was to happen.

He breathed the air. He saw the clouds. He felt a cool breeze that he had not felt for many years. The soot of the mines and the heat of the magma-pipes which broiled deep beneath the surface seemed to melt from him as mist falls before the rising sun. He took a deep lungful, and let it out. All his rage, all his hate at the being of Armok. He let it out, and roared, and screamed. Rejoicing was in the halls, for the noises which echoed through door and lock, wall and stone, meant that he was still alive.

The zombies gathered, though their queen was not there. Even she would not dare face Apiks, Miner and embodiment of all that is Forumite and true. As a storm gathers before the sun, the dead flocked before the burning flare of light that was Apiks. And whilst the sun can be covered in cloud easily, the flame of the Elders is not so easily quenched. They could not reach him, so they blocked his entrance. They left Apiks stranded outside the safety of his own walls. The Heroes had fallen. The Maiden had died screaming in the dirt. The Swordsman had been cast into a dimension worse than hell. But Apiks, he liked where he was, and he was staying.

With a chuckle he eyed the masses before him, and recalled the hordes his forefather had seen. He knew that this was but a candle before a bonfire, and laughed at their pitiful excuse for an invasion. He saw the murder in their hole-riddled husks, saw them eyeing him back with their lifeless, worm filled sockets. Again he laughed, and the murder in their eyes was edged with fear. Before his laugh they trembled as if facing a gale. He lifted his pick from where he had carelessly slung it over his shoulder. He hefted it and looked at it. A plain thing with a worn, copper head and a splintered wooden haft which had given him more blisters and pain than any weapon could ever accomplish. Just a pick, but he had mined this fort with it, and judged the pain a small price for his Fortress. The heroes died, but Apiks lived. He raises the pick which created Necrothreat, and the dead rolled backwards like the tide in reverse; they still held the entrance against him, though. Laughing, a great blast of merriment, he sank his pick into the loamy ground. If it could mine a fortress, it could mine a tunnel! And so Apiks, of the line of the First Apiks, possessed of blood more noble than kings, laughed in the might of Ur's Armies and simply mined away

from them, a fresh breeze following him back into the fortress of his making. The smile never left his face.



### 12th Moonstone

Traitor. Fiend. Trickster.

Words used to describe our sole survivor, Sodel. He faced the Bane of the Military. He was struck by his deadly dust and crawled through many halls in pain, bleeding his life blood on the hard, cold stone. Murderer. Sodel the Vampire, killer of IronTomato and countless others. Blood fiend of the night, damned spirit of Night. Slave of Armok. All names used of Sodel, our great hero! In the everlasting words of NAV, when Highmax told me what he had sensed in his comrade I was agape. The only thing to come to mind or lips were the words "Well Bollocks"

Highmax had laughed, and I felt a twinge of annoyance. A vampire amongst us, and one of our heroes! Such blatant evil would have to be punished. It was not his blood that he shed for Necrothreat, but IronTomato's and all his other victims. My hand went involuntarily to my neck and felt the scars there. He must be punished. With grim certainty and cold fury in my heart, I picked up my spear with finality. He would pay. No reason was in my mind other than to kill this monster, and no thought was given to how it would look when I killed an innocent-seeming Forumite. Murder,

bloody murder, was what held me.

Murder may have hold me, but it was Highmax who stopped me. With a grip of steel, he pushed me back into my office. I stuttered in fury and tried to get past again, with the same result. My hand stiffened with white-knuckle intensity upon my weapon, then reluctantly relaxed. It fell to the ground with a clang.

"I suppose you think there is another way?" I said sarcastically.

Highmax merely nodded, his face blank, and said "Yes." The only man other than Apiks capable of over ruling an overseer. Anyone else would be outraged by his presumption, but I laughed, long and deep. He joined in, and we laughed at my folly until it faded from a joke and became nothing at all. Then he told me his plan, and I listened. It was a good plan.

Apiks went up to Sodel the following day. "My friend!" he said with a grin. "I have need of bravery such as yours!" Either the vampire was a good actor, or he truly was amazed to be in the presence of a legend. I like to believe that in that, the last moment I saw him, the vampire had an inkling that Apiks was mad, saw it in the line of his jaw and in his angry stance. For if he knew that, then he was scared. A scared vampire is not easy to find, but I like to believe, I hope, that I saw one before me on that day. "You are to be stationed in the dining hall. Come!" Apiks led the way, the crowd parting before him. Sodel came in the middle, still wounded, and behind him came The Abomination and the Guardian of Necrothreat, Highmax. Sodel seemed unconcerned, though he walked more sluggishly, as if he felt the import of this time. Seldom were the three points of the triangle together, hardly ever in living memory had the Lore Lord, the Warrior and the Fool marched in accord with a single purpose. He must pay.

We locked him in the vacant dining room to spend eternity compelled by Highmax's power. When we have need, he runs like a trained animal to pull a lever. His sobs are heard now and then, his moans rattling through a parched throat like a breeze in the desert. The noise disturbs some, unrests others. At night it seems the loudest, reverberating in the halls while the people try to sleep. When I hear it, I smile in my sleep. I had never heard a sweeter lullaby than a Blood Fiend going thirsty.

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## The Engraving of Battle NAV by TalonisWolf

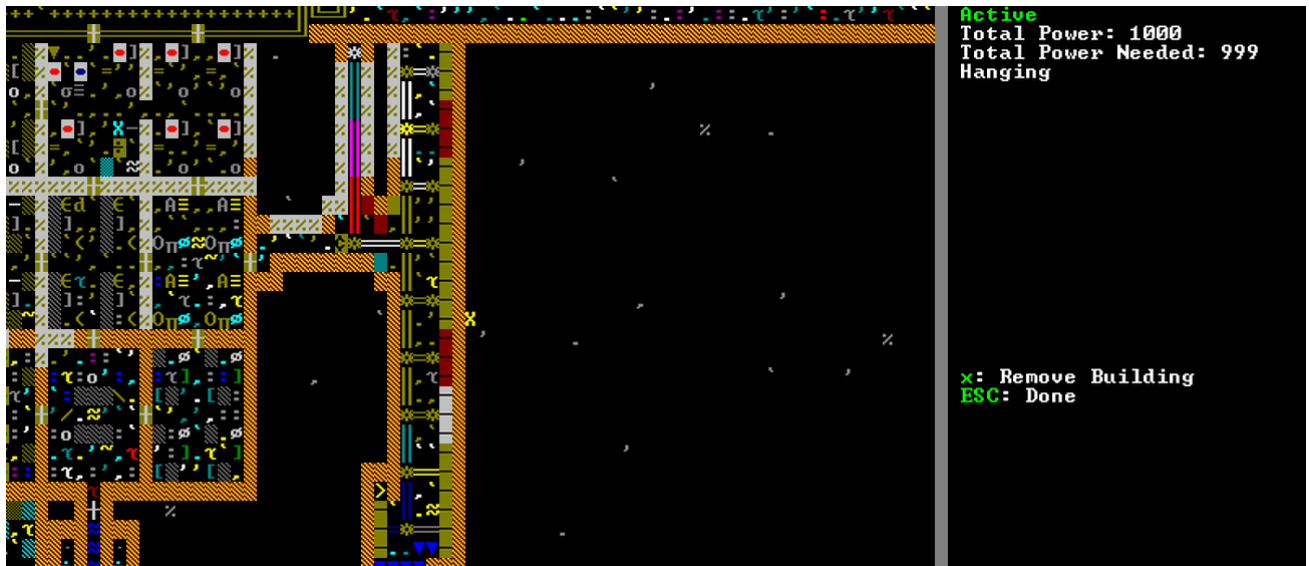


It was nearly done. My Great Plan. The focus of my entire year of Overseeing. I haven't mentioned it in this account yet, for it was my greatest and most terrible act. It was both brave and foolish, much like myself. I can only hope that whatever benevolent gods there may be will forgive my soul for this atrocity against the very nature they helped to create. May the light be with me. May the light be with us all.

### 26th Obsidian

This world was hewn from the fabric of reality, shaped and turned by the tears of Armok. But there was something here before, something predating this insubstantial reality we live in. A world of power and strength, of heat and flame. A world to be exploited. My need for wood was at last sated. I recall how I had stood and watched the final sapling grow to its full strength, my hopes pinned to its fragile, slender length. I recall the feeling of satisfaction as it was full-grown, its life put to use in my

great plan. "Cut it!" I had said sharply, not wanting to see its sap on a hatchet, like blood on an axe. I'm acting like a damned elf, I grousched to myself. A woodsforumite ran forward, darted a look at me, and plunged his blade deep into its bark. Thunk. Thunk. Thunk. The sounds of doom. Thunk. Thunk. Thunk. A necessary doom.



Ay, the elders of old would weep crystalline tears to see such misery wreaked upon the world of their making. Indeed, Apiks, chiefest amongst them, was compelled to face the threat of Necrothreat; the dead. In so doing, he caught a glimpse of the land he so seldom saw, but often thought of. A world of green and tree, of sky and brook. A land to fight for. A land of fire in its own right, the blood shed upon the verdant green a testament to its bite, and its beauty. Ay, the elders would weep. But from the fires of death does greatness rise, and Necrothreat would be the biggest bonfire the world had ever had the honour to bear witness to. Let the Elders weep; we would be the ones to act!

Th4DwArfY1 shook his tired head, and rubbed the grains of sleep from his eyes. His beard rose and fell, bunched and then collapsed again to flow on his chest as he yawned. It hadn't been a hard day, writing this record, but it had wrangled more emotion from him than any event in his life. Nay, he thought as he assessed his fatigue. It had taken more out of him than even witnessing the events themselves, for then he had merely been one taking place in the inner most workings of madness; now he could consider free of such strangling things as insanity.

Th4DwArfY1, he who had sought the ultimate courage of fighting. Th4DwArfY1, he who had faced the dreaded yak, had met the storied NAV, dealt with Apiks, fought with Highmax. Th4DwArfY1, whose name is both curse and blessing in the Mountainhomes, whose very presence made the undead tremble and the living weep. First of all, Forumite, secondly man and thirdly Abomination. This man was afraid and trembling like a new-born kitten within the confines of a dank, dark office.



This legend was writing his legend, and in so doing was felling himself one word at a time. His mind plagued by what he had done, Th4DwArfY1 sat in his disgustingly lavish office, the Silence spreading like dread wings on either side of his still body like a dark cloak. At his sudden, indrawn breath the darkness trembled, then shattered as he softly began to hum, a slow, mournful tune as old as the bones of the earth themselves. Rising from this halting tune, he fashioned words and strung them like jewels along its midnight length. Let us now hear what he sings, but give him privacy as well. For in that room a legend dwelled in the very pit of despair. A patriotic man shirked his duty to sing and write a story. So yes, let's leave him for a bit and listen to his song; and if he sheds any tears along the way, who is to know but the shadows in his still office?

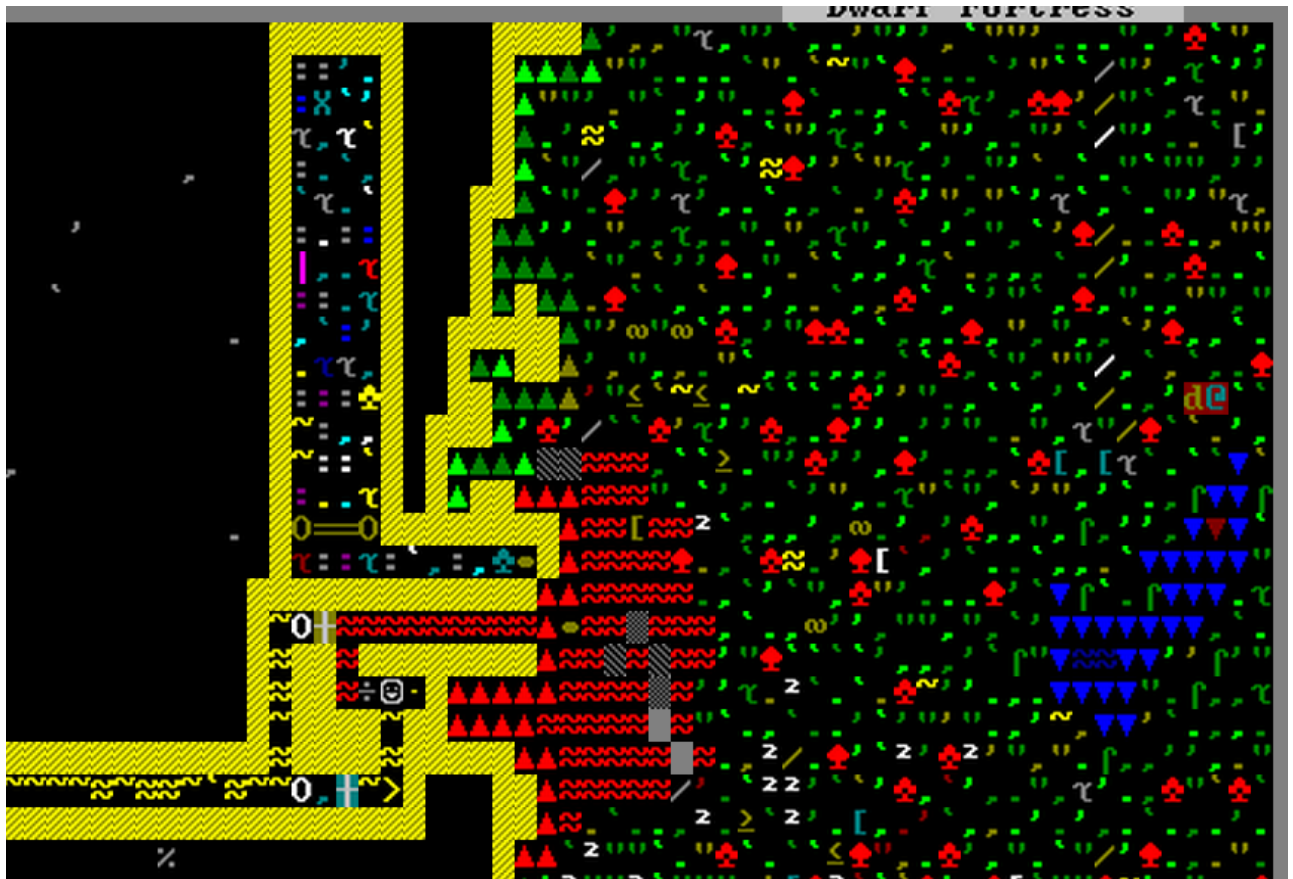
Along the road of life and death  
I travelled long with ne'er a breath.  
Betwixt the hills that plagued my life  
And over plains I met my strife.  
Oh, my world is shrinking every day,  
I long to see some hills again  
And watch them march beside my way  
Where long I slept upon the lane.  
Ay, the trees there clumped in mighty groves  
And apples throve and grew around.  
And yes, upon the fairest heights  
I wandered, laughed and made my peace.

And yet I came towards this plane  
Where none that live are ever safe.  
I wept in tears, and flooded land  
In grime and darkness, drought and sand.  
I sought the light and found the blight  
That scoured my mind and blinded sight.  
I looked for life and death I found  
That spread upon the grass and ground.

As his song ends, let us depart from this place entirely, leaving Th4DwArfY1 to his silence and thought. Nay, listen not to the tremulous noise of quill scratching on paper. Instead, let us focus on the words themselves and leave him to his own thoughts, be they light or dark.

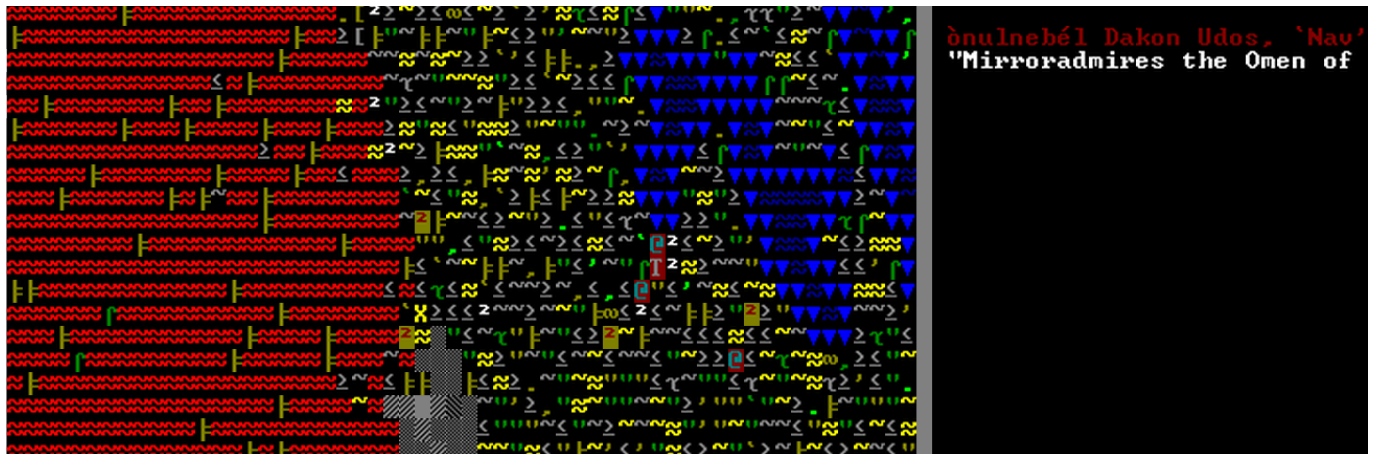
I stood beside the huge, churning water wheels. Hundreds of gallons of water pushed the great, wooden arms around to create the 999 power needed. The sound was quite deafening, and those Forumites nearby complained of the noise. Their complaints were disregarded for the greater good. 1000 power was thrummed through gears and axles, sped along its way by the mighty force of nature that was the River, by some called the Bloodwater. The power sped through its lines and limbs, spearing a dining room before it shot beneath my feet to pierce the very stone. From there it spread its gleaming strands through metal and stone, mechanism and

screw. And then it hit the blood of the earth and, flinching, rebounded to speed back to the top, shooting past where it had begun its journey. It twisted and twined in courses known only to it before it stopped, halted, leashed and reigned before Apiks. It was he who rode this sea of energy, and in the last moments of Necrothreat he became a star of vibrancy. Highmax looked with awe at a sight his magic could not hope to accomplish, but which Forumite ingenuity had leashed for its own purposes. I gave a nod to Apiks, and fire, molten streams of death, were summoned at his beck and called. Apiks strained, strained, strained and released.



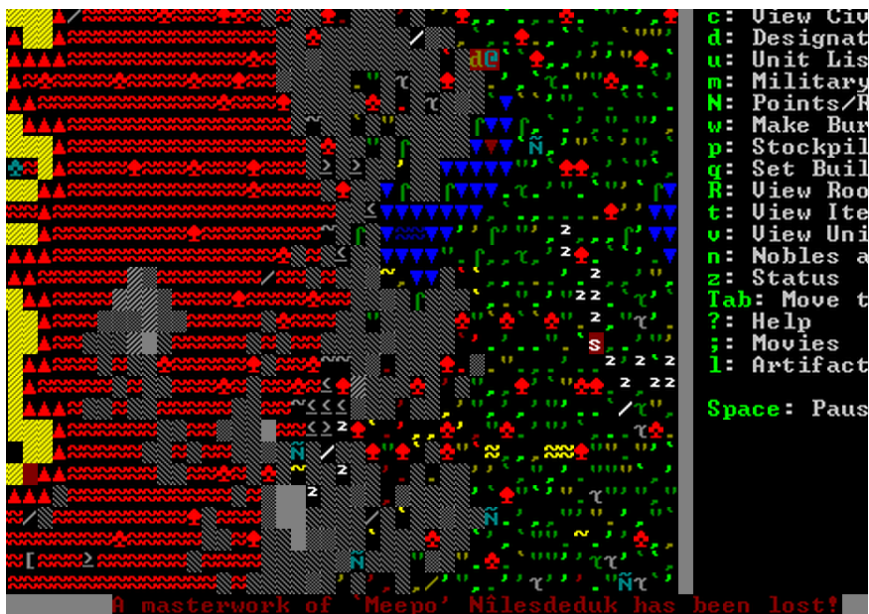
Carnage. A hash of screams and death. They stay with me today, those screams which pierced through to my hiding place, where I cowered, the Abomination scared of his own final act of madness upon the world. You could say that my actions that day scared me sane, knocked the haze of Armok from my mind like some drunken stupor I had never even known existed. Highmax stood for a second, tears glistening as gems in his eyes. Apiks hung in the balance, the power coursing through him fit to destroy the very fabric of reality. Or loose fiery death on the world. And I wept and hid, bemoaning my sanity, for it meant that I could not hide from myself, that thrice accursed being. Highmax came to, and unslung his sword. He pointed to the raging inferno of power and a blue twister of thin but strong power leapt eagerly out, blasting into the energy around Apiks, merging with it. The glow around him, like cloth, became threaded with jewel-like blue. Now Highmax and Apiks strained, and legions

died. NAVs corpse was engulfed by the flames, a gleam of thanks shining in his eyes as his beaten and tortured form was shrouded in cleansing fire.



And still I hid; my greatest shame.

To my office I had fled, I had barred my door. I had ignored the screams and shouts, the mad capering of my Forumite companions. For I knew there was no joy in this. The very land, like the Undead NAV, was tortured and twisted. It groaned, and my heart ached. The green that had so struggled to grow was engulfed by encroaching sheets of writhing flame, and crafts the First Forumites had made in their sweat went with them, their like never again seen upon the earth. A long-dead Forumite's final craft of beauty was taken forever from us, and my heart tore just that little bit more. Oh, the woe I felt could have engulfed the entirety of Necrothreat, no need for the eviscerating flame beyond the gates! My mind rested on artists such as Meepo and NotaPirate, and I wept a broken apology to their dead spirits.





And still Apiks set on his high seat above the world of fire that Necrothreat had become upon my whim. His sweat upon the wheel was turned to fire enchanted by Highmax and the water. From liquid came the strength to make such heat; even in my state I let loose a grim, tear-choked chuckle at the thought before my despair again took me. My head began to throb in time to the grinding of the frantic gears. They tore through my mind like Highmax's swords, like knives through butter. But before me grew a shaded figure, at first seen as nothing but woeful fancy. It grew as a sickly plant does, deformed and broken, a hand clenched in white intensity upon a staff of ebony. The face of the figure, shrouded by a black cloak and hamed in shadow was he, and his very voice sent ripples of dread through me. I looked into those eyes, red flaming things, and knew I was looking at Amok. For the slimmest of seconds, I thought I could confront him, but before that baleful gaze I collapsed inwards, into the black void of my inner being. Armok stood before me, death made flesh, hate made alive. I loathed and feared him, and so I wept, and wept. Another shame.

His voice came, the whisper a snake makes as it creeps after prey in long, sickly grass. It rose from this to an almost reedy, nasal voice, then finally settled for deep, booming; commanding. "WELL DONE, WORM" spoke he, and his voice dripped sarcasm. I cringed and lay prostrate and prone on the ground, my face sleek and wet. "YOU ARE TO GO OUT THERE AND ORDER IT STOPPED, FOOL. THIS PLACE WAS NOT MADE TO WITHSTAND THE INTENSITY OF THE DEPTHS! THERE IS A CHANCE THE ENTIRE WORLD WILL FALL FROM THIS ACTION OF YOURS! BEGONE! FIX IT!" His voice grew dread and terrible to behold, and I flinched and writhed, and then he yanked me upwards onto the balls of my feet. My terrified mind comprehended what he had done. Puppet strings. My eyes glinted from something less physical than tears, and I opened my mouth. Armok waited, the dark



pooling about him; he thought I was going to meekly obey. I grinned, quick and vicious, and if darkness could look surprised, it did at that moment.

“APIKS!” My voice was not the boom of Armok, nor the steady, gravelly pitch it usually adopts. My voice was both the wind and the pick. The entire fortress shook under its potent force, and the issuing flame halted for the merest fragment of time. And then Apiks replied, and I was lifted from the ground on wings of pale, gleaming silver. My face was cleansed of such earthly things as tears and my mind no longer consumed by sadness. I was myself, and I was furious. The power of Highmax’s magic was laced throughout my omnipotent wings, but it pulsed red, a bright, magma pitched burgundy. Armok gaped as the power of magic and engineering flowed into me in a roaring river, and I swelled under its influence. The roaring torrent of magma still spread below the open sun and sky in Necrothreat.



With another vicious grin, I sent the gaping shade into the Nameless Void as easily as if brushing off an annoying bug. I waited, and sure enough it returned, screaming, roaring; the wrath of a god pitted against the power of a Forumite. Another grin. I knew what I'd put my money on. From the Nameless void he flew, a bat out of hell, and I stood with my wings of power and waited, feeling the strain of Highmax and Apiks as they fed both me and the pumps power. With a roar of anger, I met the coming god, power for power. His physical shape blurred, and he became liquid, flowing over my beam of energy. With a growl I used my force in the time-honoured tradition of war; as a club, I used the crackling, red-and white mass to crash with the force of a wagon into his side, tossing the being of Amok through wall and lock, key and door, past the startled faces of Forumites still locked in their pointless revels. With a screech, Armok became one with the Blood of the Earth, became one with it, shade and darkness bathed in flame and light. One more scream that shook stone and soil, and Armok had gone. None know where he is to this day, and as I stood and watched the roiling mass of magma I did not dare to hope that it was the end of Armok. But he was gone, for the moment.

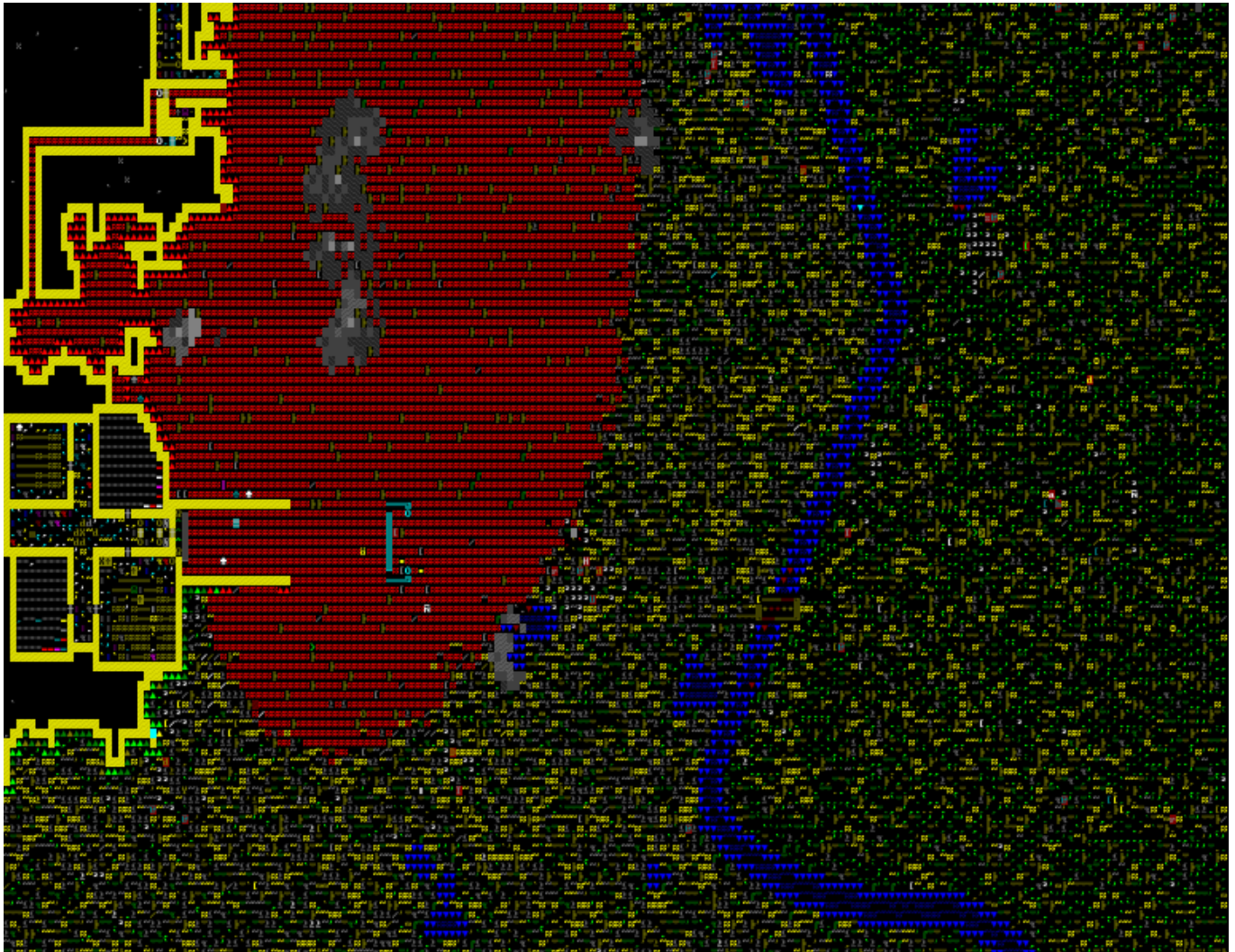


I felt a tugging, and saw the stream getting thinner. More power needed. I stood ready to give the energy up, my wings of power. But I hesitated, my mind sharper than ever before, than even the time I had dealt with the spirits of the dead. Inside me a kernel awoke, and I knew what to do. In me the colours swirled. The White of the river and Apiks, the Red of myself and the Blue of Highmax. And I knew, in that moment, I knew. The only way to do this was with love for the land, with patriotism. This could never be without my help, without my love for the land holding it together. I threw my head back and felt rather than made my neck muscles cord in thick, wiry ropes of muscle. In one hand the Essence of Apiks, in the other the Essence of



Highmax. I grinned one final time in my office, the harsh edge shown to Armok dimmed into a passionate love of my homeland. From my heart issued a third, red colour; the Essence of Th4DwArfY1. I hurled all three colour to Apiks who caught the force of falling mountains with a tense ease, as if catching a viper and sill knowing it may bite. This force he fed through the pumps, and fiery destruction was once more rained upon the land. Th4DwArfY1 collapsed in his office, panting and wheezing in a room that held a chair and table, and placed upon them as if by the hand of fate, a quill and paper....

Now leave the three heroes to their battle, as Th4DwArfY1 slumbers whilst his power is spent to cover the land in fire. Nay, don't look down just yet, do not see the ribbon of water being stalked by the sea of flame. Nay, leave the Three to their battle. Do not hear the cuss of Apiks in a tongue unbeknownst to any there, nor see Highmax's straining face as he silently mouths the fated words "Well Bollocks." Instead, let us look to the future, where a glimmer of hope shines





But from the flame a new beginning arises, from the destruction life shall spring. To make a sword the flame is used, to purify the metal. And thus was Necrothreat purged by the three. Thus was the Army of Ur defeated for a time, and thus did The Patriot, The Warrior and The Lore Lord wreak havoc upon their beloved home, so that it might live again.

And so, as the flames and blood of Necrothreat spilled on the old fields of war, Highmax, the old war veteran, slayer of Ur, used the power of his magic to aid in the force that could end the final days of the war for Necrothreat... And what a feat, by Th4DwArfY1, the Loremaster and the swordsman!

The dead, without voices, screamed silently as the life blood of the fortress enveloped and entombed them; their great siege was over; they had lost this battle... And thus marked the end days of the Great War against the Necrothreaders...But when could a second such war arise?

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### Talonis, the Wolf-Kin Friend

Oh, Talonis the wolf-kin friend,  
Who drew in arcs of gracefulness,  
Took to mind to draw a sketch  
Of purest dwarven ugliness.

He looked about his subjects three,  
And saw their tattered clothes.  
Their beards, bedraggled, hung so limp  
And in their eyes hid many woes.

Oh, Talonis he also saw  
Their shoes were scuffed, their hair a mess!  
Their robes once fine were tattered rags;  
And yet they stood there sorrowless.

He saw their eyes of deepest woe,  
He saw their angry stance,  
He saw their calloused working hands,  
He saw their weapons, spear and lance.

Ah, Talonis the wolven kin!  
Aloft he drew his fated pen.  
He saw the truth behind their look;  
And saw they were beyond his ken.

He smote the page and with his thought

He drew them kings of olden times!  
Their hair he spun like gleaming gold  
That hung in gleaming lines.

Their brows he gave a noble tilt,  
Their shoulders dignity,  
He gave them life that could not wilt;  
Emblazoned them with heraldry.

They stood there yet, his subjects three  
In badly woven clothes that stank,  
And knew before his scrutiny  
They held the highest Dwarven rank.

When down his sketching pen had gone,  
He wiped his sweating head.  
He looked about his subjects three  
And saw the kings that he had made.

## The Final Chapter

### The Rule of Sprin, the Destroyer

#### The complete destruction of Necrothreat

Sprin sat in his room drinking. He hasn't done anything much except tend to the wounded and their severed body parts. "there has to be a way to get Jenny back." he thought "The Threadromancers may know something, if I could integrate one maybe I can find away."

He went into the chamber of the human Threadromancer and preceded to beat the "living" daylights out of it.

"How do you bring the dead back!?" He screamed "Tell me how!?"

"There is one way..." the Threadromancer said "Where should reside are beyond the candy."

Sprin walked out of the room, finally a lead to bringing back Jenny. "I wouldn't do that." He appeared around the corner. "It's best to leave the dead dead."

"No." Sprin said "I don't care what anyone thinks I'm getting Jenny back."

"As you wish" and He faded into the shadows.

Behind the candy. That's all he needed to do. He ran to the tomb of Highmax, pickaxe in hand he dug.

He eventually after a long while, broke into a pocket... In the darkness he heard the sweet voice of which he missed.

"Come here Sprin." The voice said "be with me forever."

"Jenny!" Sprin ran into the darkness, but what he found was not Jenny and it grabbed the mad doctor ripping him in half.

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"Congrats Sprin" He said "you have destroyed Necrothreat."

"Wasn't I dead?" Sprin asked "I just got ripped in half"

"Yes Sprin and Necrothreat is destroyed once again"

"What do you mean again?"

"Let me introduce myself. My name is Sprin from Necrothreat I"

"What? Necrothreat I?"

"Yes, Necrothreat is in multiple realities, all of which are in death and destruction. I am you from the first reality."

"The first reality, how many Necrothreats are there?"

"As far as I can figure out there is an infinite number of those murder holes we call Necrothreat."

"So no matter what happens people are dying in those hells"

"Well not if my plan falls together."

"Your plan?"

"I'm trying to destroy the Necrothreat Multiverse sending it into the plains of Oblivion, but I need help from other Sprins. Would you join me?"

"Yes no one should have to suffer from the putrid plane of existence."

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## Poems of Th4DwArfY1

### Last Stand

The heroes Three were caught betwixt  
The fire and demon's ire  
Alone they stood against the foe,  
Their fighting quick, they did not tire.

About them strewn was Father Fort,  
The place they loved was Necrothreat-  
Ay, you have heard the tales, I'm sure,  
Of Necrothreat where heroes dwelt.

The ruins of once a mighty fort  
Are still a lovely sight-  
There rose a carved statue's face,  
There gleamed an Eldritch light.

Th4DwArfY1 has drowned the world  
In molten rock and flame,  
And Sprin, the doctor of that place,  
Began the demon's reign.

But yet we see a flashing spear,  
A pick is raised on high,  
A sword is seen to rent the air  
And in it gleams the sky.

So fought the Three as all about  
Their lives were torn apart-  
The Forumites around them die,  
Like sick and twisted art.

Th4DwArfY1 was struck and died,  
His spear was shed with death;  
His shield he dropped, his life he lost,  
He left behind all earthly wealth.

Now Highmax roared to see such sights,  
His sword was liquid hate-  
A shout he loosed upon the foe  
As he embraced his fate.

He dashed beyond the demon's lines,  
He dodged the flaming lake,  
He struck the leader in the mouth  
And thus is what he spoke:

“My soul will scour the underworld,  
My blade will haunt your dreams,  
Your children spawn I'll brand with hate,  
My anger borne on wings.  
Kill me now  
Kill me now  
I'll have my vengeance  
In my death.”

And so Highmax was laid down low,  
And drew his final breath,  
His sword was left upon the stone  
To mark his tomb and place of death.

Now Apiks, Elder born and bred,  
Held up his brilliant pick.  
It glowed with light, was bright with white,  
His strokes were fierce and quick.

But all were dead; he was alone,  
And so he fled his home.

Behind him roiled the clouds of smoke,  
He fell to sleepless roam.

Away he went through dark and night,  
His soul was on the breeze.  
He came upon a newer start  
Away from magma seas.  
There made again was Necrothreat,  
With Apiks at the head.  
He knew the past that he had lived,  
Recalled the friends who'd bled.

But Necrothreat arises yet,  
From ashes does it soar,  
No god can burn it from the world,  
We live to fight another war.

### Recall the Rules Forsaken

I saw a city burn away,  
I heard its walls collapse,  
Its smell was smoke and fiery sparks,  
Its look was broken waste.

Oh, should our world be taken  
In the flame and fire,  
Recall the rules forsaken!

Just sit and see the coming fog,  
Remember as it was,  
Just sit and look about this place;  
Forget, forget its woes.

Oh, why can I not sit and watch  
A burning city die?  
Do something and I will be destroyed,  
I can't do nothing, not even try.

Oh, should our world be taken  
In the flame and fire,  
Recall the rules forsaken!

I hear them screaming out my name!

I feel the acrid wind.  
I see the trees about me bend,  
And feel my legs then do the same.

And all in darkness is consumed  
Insatiably it is devoured;  
Our lives are smoke,  
Our houses card.

Oh, should our world be taken  
In the flame and fire,  
Recall the rules forsaken.

Oh, I hear the flames  
Inside my soul,  
They stay there  
And burn a hole.

If the flames are going to burn  
Inside the city's dwellings,  
I'll hold my hands above it all;  
Preserve the weak and save the strong.  
Oh, but still I hear the flames here  
Playing in their little games;  
I see winds of fire infernos  
Sweep past like red tornadoes.

Oh, should our world be taken  
In the flame and fire,  
Recall the rules forsaken  
And practiced by your sire.

### Despair, ye all Dead, Despair and Die

The hero will come in flame and fire  
Amidst the ruins he'll wander;  
Hear his footsteps on the ground,  
They boom and then resound.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

Oh, his feet leave prints of fire on turf

His spear is lightning truly forged;  
He wields it in his iron-shod hand,  
It hovers o'er the shadowed land.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

Now hear his voice, so old and deep,  
It booms in halls that long were disused.  
Oh, see his figure pass by doors  
Where Forumites once fought their wars.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

Now smell the smoke that this man smells,  
And see the fires ablaze with light;  
Believe the things he sings about,  
Of bravery, the virtues that count.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

Again his foot strikes stone  
Just like his spear once struck bone.  
His feet are set upon a path,  
None are safe from his wrath. Oh!  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

He sits inside the merry lighting  
Of a camp fire that he has made.  
He looks deep into the ruby depths,  
Their ringing flame makes fiery steps.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

He looks upon the spiral stair  
And death is in his eyes;  
He drops his spear into the mud  
And mounts that first fire-rimmed stud.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

The foot-falls now strike up the flame,  
Erasing all his earthly pain.  
He rises higher, our hero,  
He vanquishes his pain, his sorrow.  
Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.



Our hero strides amongst the clouds,  
His feet are free of sin,  
He is a Forumite of Necrothreat  
And onwards his path is set.  
Beware his vengeance, he sings a tale  
Of life, of death, of all that's real.

Despair, all ye dead, despair and die,  
Descend to hell, forever to cry.

### To the Bottle

To the bottle, me lads, to the bottle!  
Let's drown our woe and raise our glass  
To Old Armok, our Lord of Blood!  
Drown the Woe! Down you go!

Your beard is bushy when you drink,  
With tassels spreading down like silk!  
A beardless elf enters the room,  
And shows shaven chin to you.

What to do? What to do? An elf he is!  
We'll burn his wood, the tree-sworn monk,  
And sow his land with salt and brine-  
His house we'll burn with beer we've drunk!

To the bottle, me lads, to the bottle!  
Let's drown our woe and raise our glass  
To Old Armok, our Lord of Blood!  
Drown the Woe! Down you go!

The magma rises in the deep,  
It fills the halls while we yet sleep.  
The smell of burning drifts on up  
And seeps around my drinking cup.

Release the sea, quench its thirst.  
Rise the steam, do your worst.  
Boil and kill, maim and steal,  
For we are Dwarves, and made of steel!

To the bottle, me lads, to the bottle!  
Let's drown our woe and raise our glass  
To Old Armok, our Lord of Blood!  
Drown the Woe! Down you go!

In the deeps a beast comes fast  
And kills our dwarves with misty blast.  
Laugh and cheer, then sober jeer  
As Beast sheds a single pain filled tear...

So watch it cry, then help it die!  
Give it booze, a drunken beast,  
Feed it high with malty yeast.  
Then give it light, a torch!! so bright....

To the bottle, me lads, to the bottle!  
Let's drown our woe and raise our glass  
To Old Armok, our Lord of Blood!  
Drown the Woe! Down you go!

The booze is gone, our revels done,  
We go to work with the rising sun.  
We mine and hew, we work all day.  
But then the night comes, and so we say...

Open the barrels, the booze and the beer,  
Go have a laugh filled with good cheer.  
Remember times of Dwarven lore,  
Then pick up an axe and go to war!

To the battle, me lads, to the battle!  
Let's drown our ire and raise our axe  
To Old Armok, our Lord of Blood!  
Drown the Foe! Down you go!

### The Ground is Bloody Turf

The stars on high are sentinels,  
The ground is bloody turf,  
The sky above is stretching on,  
O'erlooking mournful earth.  
Our heads are raised in deathlessness,  
A creed that we desire

To keep a-beat within our chests,  
Beside our living fire.

The stars on high are blocked from view  
By spreading darkling ruin  
Which thrusts its points into the air  
Where dead in piles are strewn.  
The ground below is rock and mud,  
The grass above is burned,  
The land about is covered in  
The sores of earth that's churned.

There swells the sea of magma's wrath,  
There dwell the dead that walk;  
In blighted vale and dale they are,  
These beasts that scorn the rock  
That Forumites have wracked and hewn  
In craft, in wall, in lock.  
The ruins cry tears of mortar's woe  
For life the dead have mocked.

Oh, it came apart one summer's day  
When in the sky the sun  
Was baleful, big and roundly seen  
From night to fleeting run.  
The dead in legion's marched about,  
The magma mocked what was;  
For in its glow the sun was killed,  
In doing what it does.

And Sprin the Doctor laughed in glee,  
In swelling, bursting mirth,  
To see the flame that wreathed the land  
And razed the budding turf.  
He clapped, he danced,  
He spun around, his heels he clacked,  
His eyes agleam with light,  
His form with laughter wracked.

Now up, and up the towers stretch  
Beyond our mortal sight.  
But down on earth where death is sown,  
There lives no thing but blight.  
The Mad Destroyer's left this place,  
His hands with blood are wet,  
But still brood walls and towers high,  
Of fairest Necrothreat.

## Forumites I Once Knew

Where are the Forumites I once knew,  
The swords, the axe, the mace?  
Oh where are they, the brave and true,  
That I had loved to see.

The halls now ring silently  
Cursing lack of life.  
Oh where, oh where are they?  
My heart with woe is rife.

Where once great pillars sweeping rose  
Bejewelled in light and gold,  
There now is naught, not even foes-  
Their works have long been turned to mould.

A shade, I walk between the rooms  
Where once sang bards with merriment;  
Ah, how I long to hear their haunting tunes,  
But oh, they're gone, their beauty's spent.

No more shall I be cast adrift  
For I am here inside the Fort  
Of Forumites, where long I dwelt  
In blazing ball, in flow'ring court.

I turn my back from this drear place,  
A tear is in my eye-  
They're gone, the Forumites,  
An age has passed, I watched it die.

No more is bravery an art,  
No longer NAV is drunk on joy.  
We were the last alive to see  
A place the gods could not destroy.

"Where are my friends," I sigh  
And in the sky the sun begins to climb.  
"Where did they go?" I whisper; cry,  
Distraught, a second time.

Behind is Necrothreat,  
Ahead the whole of life and light,  
But I would throw it all to hell,  
For one more glimpse, a single sight....

Of halls that gleam and glitter white,  
Then red, then green, then blue!  
Of faces harsh and hard,  
But nonetheless honest and true.  
Mayhap also I would see the land  
Around turn green, fertile and ripe,  
But more I'd love to see the men,  
The ones who fought for what was right.  
And then I'd see the people live,  
And walk, and talk-just live their lives!  
Oh what I'd give to see that sight  
With these two weary eyes.

### The Hammer Pounds

Hammers pound, resounding sound.  
Anvils smote, smitten with the flame.  
Forumites, the last run by  
And death comes gentle as a sigh.  
They came from marsh and killed us, families all,  
But we are not the type to humble fall.  
The blade, ah how it pierced my side!  
Fell where the Forumites reside.  
No fingers clench its eldritch hilt,  
No arm shall wield it high!  
For we are here, the Forumites,  
And we shall give them hell before we die.  
The hammer pounds inside my head,  
The price of death was willing paid...  
But how the hammers pound within my head!

It took a blade to end my life,  
We Forumites, we live on strife;  
But there we were the last to go-  
We stood. United. A race about to die.  
A clash resounds, the pain, it splits  
My age-old heart, my ancient wits.  
A spark. A shade. A shadow's dream;  
Yet there it was, and hammers pound, the anvils ring.

On mountain heights we held our place,  
We tended herds of reindeer race,

Beneath the surface crops were grown  
Where seeds, in piles, were sown.  
Peaceful, loving, caring folk  
That died when first the hammer smote  
And forged a blade, an arrow-  
How little we knew what sorrow we would sow.

Ah, the flame rekindles! The fort renewed is born,  
That shade is of my blood, my kins-man sworn.  
He lights the forge.... I try to speak with lips no longer there  
That I shouldn't, couldn't, wouldn't dare...  
For in the flame a work is born,  
And while it shines, or while it's worn  
We try to kill.. but then I know, our race is old  
And we must fight for all we hold.  
I rest. A shade needs flame to cast its length, but...  
The hammer pounds inside my head,  
The price of death was willing paid...  
But how the hammers pound within my head!

### Live the Life

We work in darkness, live in Light  
With all to gain and naught to lose,  
We live a life of beer and ale  
And keep our mission as our muse.

Fires roar and in their depths we see  
The heroes that had walked.  
There Perrin, golden eyes ablaze,  
There Sprin with hacksaws stalked.

We till the soil beneath the ground  
And hoard the gold, the gem and ore.  
But yet, we keep our mission close  
And listen to the storied lore.

Where Apiks strides and Mastah rides,  
Highmax duels and Armok rules,  
Where Ur arose and dealt our foes  
We lived as Forumites.

We make our crafts and spin our wool

With fingers calloused by their work  
And live our lives without the sun,  
For we are cast in dark and murk.

We listen to the tales and live the life  
We keep our mission by our hearts  
But where were we when danger calls  
And doom befalls, the dying starts?

Our fingers calloused bear no arms,  
Forgot the yore-sung blade,  
And whilst Highmax is in our thoughts  
We lost the knowledge that he made.

And where is Nav, our hero born of old  
Who rode to battle drinking ale?  
Where are our values, what have we sold  
To put our souls as up for sale?

We live the life, we farm the field  
And in our hands the hoe we wield.  
But no more axe, no shimmering shield  
The day we won our fate was sealed.

The dead are gone from Necrothreat,  
But still we keep the mission...yes?  
If they arrived, we'd smite them down!  
We'd take their lives, cause death to drown!

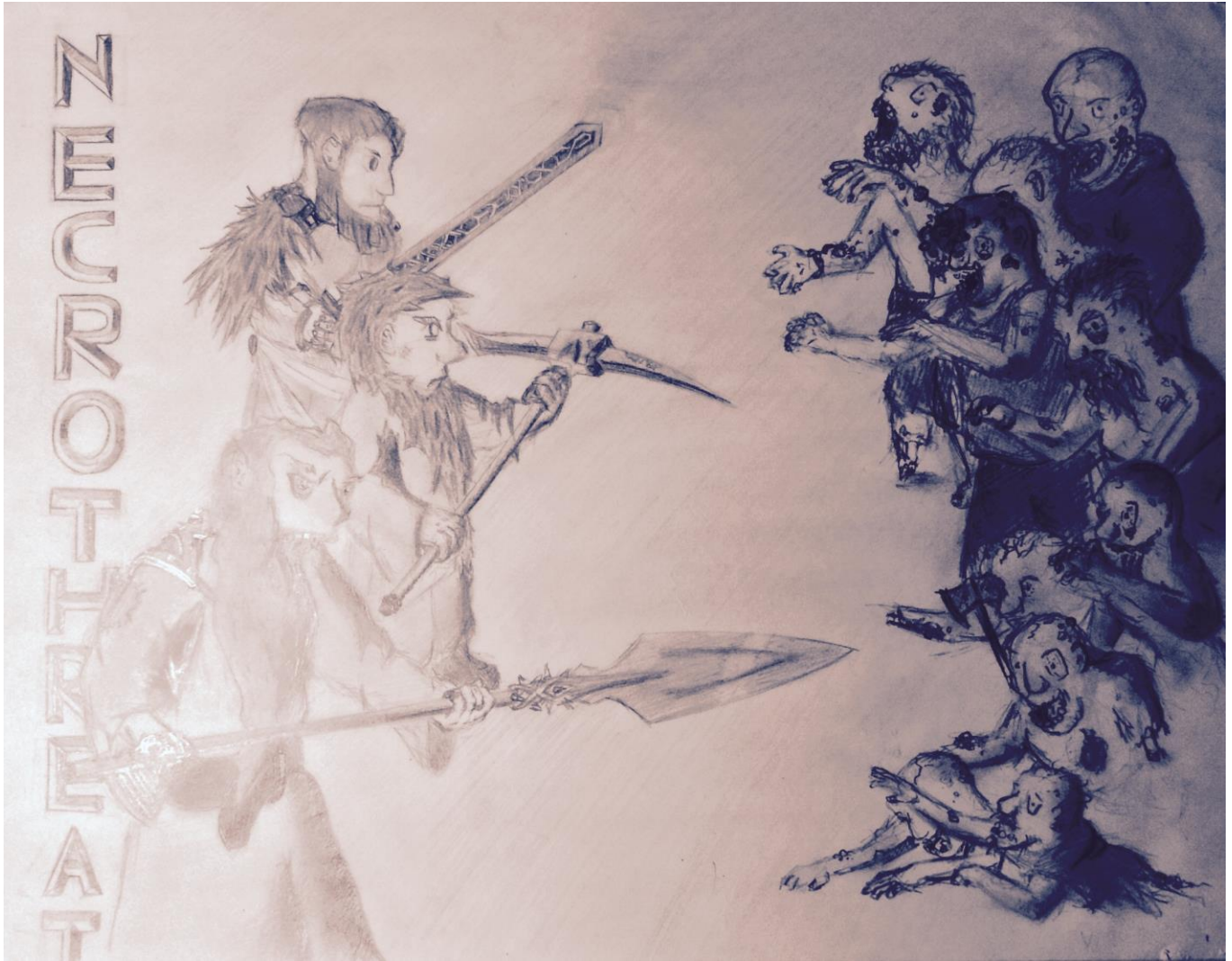
And if they came again, we'd fight them off  
We're Forumites, it's in our blood!  
Recall old Apiks, drinking Nav, fighting Highmax!  
We'll fight like Solon and live like Nav!

But...til then we need not train.  
Who has the time to fight so long?  
We live our lives, remember them,  
And leave our glories dead in song.

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## The Three Great Ones of Necrothreat by TalonisWolf



### The Fall of Necrothreat II

At last, the time has come...

A pale silence filled the halls of the forumites as a lone scream filled the air. Highmax stopped working the pumps, and looked at Elephant Parade who had a face of terror and fear written all over his face. If it wasn't covered by an elephant skin helmet, Highmax would've screamed at his look of horror. Wasara, who was down the hall, came running past them, screaming at the top of her lungs. Highmax grabbed his blade, no longer as bright blue as it was in the old homes where he was the great hero. Here? He was only known as Ur's Bane, and would forever be known as such. He grabbed EP and dragged him to the armoury at a quick trot and tossed him an axe. "Ready yourself" he said.

Dorisdwarf, Talvieno, Nav and several others, were still celebrating the defeat and

the construction of the magma cannon. Food, booze made by the master boozecrafter reborn, and bones were tossed about the table as a merry feast began when they heard a faint scream in the depths and then Wasara running by them, heading right for the gates. A loud sound of a skull splitting and the screams of Wasara stopped. Apiks walked into the room, half written slab in one hand, a pickaxe in the other. "No one opens that damned gate. Now each of you grab a weapon and prepare for the worst; I think a forgotten one was released into the mines again." Spears, axes and crossbows were distributed amongst them, NAV donning on the skill of his previous body, armed himself to the teeth with his mighty crossbow, the very same one his old body used. He was ready for anything... Almost anything...

TalonisWolf, DwArfY and Sulin all were near the barracks when they heard the screams. Wolf immediately booked it and grabbed the nearest weapon he could get his hands on. Soon, the entire fortress ran in and were grabbing whatever they could get their hands on. They all headed into the graveyard; that place they all believed would be perfect for a last stand, although they were all confident it wouldn't be the last. Highmax, DwArfY and Apiks stood side by side, Apiks taking the front and middle, pickaxe in hand. DwArfY gripped his spear with the strength that could easily crush someone's head. And Highmax stood off to the side, blade at the ready. Then they all smelled smoke. "DRAGON!" One forumite cried, but what they saw confirmed it wasn't a dragon... It was something worse.

The smoke filled the large room and a being of fire, burning brighter than the sun, stood before them, and more strange abominations created of things that should not exist, arrived. Steam, lead, mud, and even the cursed blue ore were all apparent. But one Highmax recognized stood before them all clad in armour and a crown, standing taller than anything he had ever seen, breaking through the stairwell and made of flesh and steel. It was a demon he saw on the engravings in that strange place back in the old homes. Then the bloody battle began, and half of the forumites died almost instantly.

The creature made of steam ran towards the great NAV and the heat became so intense, an explosion was created from the beer that he carried on him. NAV's body was a bloody mess that covered the entire graveyard, as well as the other 6 that stood near him, Dorisdwarf, Tal and EP were slain and splattered all over the others as well. The others were lucky to have escaped the inferno and the shock of the blast. The demons, however, were unfazed, save for the creature of steam, which ceased to exist. The fire giant belched a great flame and more forumites fell, save those who grabbed a shield. 15 were dead now, and the last remaining charged to death. Highmax kept his cool and went in, blade swinging and whirling. Apiks charged with a near snarl on his face, his past deeds and sins all were nothing in comparison to this. DwArfY let the madness of Armok consume him, his loud battlecry fuelling the hearts of the last forumites. Many fell within seconds, but the three fought on.

Sulin was slain within seconds, blood of NAV on her face, and the demon king swallowing her whole. Forty more demons arrived, and spells were fired from the

three, who let magic fly as well as their weapons clashing against the inorganic flesh of the demonic enemies. Wolf kept up with the three but then he felt something grip his ankle as he was then dragged into the ground. Looking down, he saw the decayed and mangled bodies of his once friends and family arise and pull him under in their place. He screamed but they were quickly muffled as his mouth went into the earth. The freed Necrothreader stood with the demon king, and now forumites, less than twenty strong now, watched as another enemy overwhelmed them. Then, as if the gods showed mercy, an ally was brought free and fought the dead though they did not harm him; Sodel the Vampire joined the war.

It was hopeless. Too many fell and the enemy kept getting back up. DwArfY then let the fury of Armok consume him entirely, letting every ounce of madness consume him. Red light glowed around him as the fires of Armok raged from his hands, burning the dead and scorching the demons. He didn't care who he slaughtered now. He cut down two of the last of the forumites and was headed straight to his goal: The Necrothreader. Flames covered the place, reminding Highmax of that dreaded last battle on the fields of the great dark tower. Highmax stopped for a moment and watched as DwArfY killed a demon made of adamantite by scorching it and then stabbing the point where he hit, killing it by stabbing its heart. The Necrothreader was before him, and with a clean stab of his spear, the Necrothreader's head flew off and his body fell in a lifeless slump. Highmax then charged to save his dear and close friend as he saw the demon king swing his blade down on him. DwArfY stood with a blade in between his legs as Highmax got close, and before the great warrior, the one friend who helped him in all this madness and saved them all, split into two halves and fell. Highmax let out every ounce of his energy out. Nothing mattered now but the survival of the last few. He will slay the demon king and hope it causes the rest to fall back.

He charged the mighty Lord of Demons, and he brought down his blade. Highmax dodged and slashed the hand off in a clean stroke. The demon roared in fury as his other hand grabbed Highmax and then slammed him into the ground. Highmax was barely alive but still able to stand. He stared down his enemy as he got up. Laughing, the King grabbed his blade in his other hand. A swing and Highmax barely dodged. Blood was draining from his nearly broken body quickly, and he only had seconds to live. He climbed up the demon's arm and made it to the creature's face, where the deity tried to grab him, only to meet Highmax's blade cutting deep into his eye. He roared in fury, blood covering Highmax and spraying the place with fowl black blood. Highmax twisted his blade out and stabbed the other eye before the creature smacked him into his face, digging the blade deep into his eye and ripping into his brain. He let Highmax go and fell, dying. Highmax dropped to the ground and died before his body hit the floor.

Apiks was alone now. He had nothing left but to escape. He swung his pick into the ground and disappeared in a flash of white. Apiks ran up the stairs, and was lucky his distraction worked enough for him to try and get the children to escape. Suddenly, he heard the sound of screaming as he made it to the top floor where the children he knew and saw were all being consumed by a flow of magma; someone had opened

the gate! He watched helplessly as the screams of younglings died quickly as they were swallowed and killed by the magma. The son of the dead Highmax, Timeless Bob, and Sulin's Spawn all perished before him. Life meant nothing to him now, Apiks was truly alone. He needed to escape if he wanted to live. But where? The demons are free here, and they would kill everything before he could hope to rebuild. He had one choice, and he only knew Highmax was the one capable of doing it.

The demons were already approaching when he readied his spell. He struck the earth and a flash of light enveloped them all as the crack in the earth grew and grew until the entire fortress began to collapse around them. Another, larger flash of light, and Apiks was blinded. White was all he saw, and he fell down into that crack, which grew into an abyss now. He fell and closed his eyes. He fell and all he felt was his power leaving his body. He said goodbye to the heroes, the fallen, and was ready to greet the old heroes that he was told of by Highmax. But he awoke with a start as someone was shaking him awake...

BFEL and Talvieno sat next to him on the wagon Apiks felt Toady One slap him awake. "Get up! We're almost there, Apiks." He got up and gripped his pickaxe. It was copper, unlike his powerful steel he remembered he had. "Where am I?" He asked sleepily. Sprin laughed at him from the back of the cart. "You were the one who came up with this. How can you forget? You even named it; Necrothreat, The land of wealth and a salvation from the undead." His grin seemed almost too kind, hiding something. Mastahcheese laughed as he was fiddling with some junk in the cart as he walked next to the cart. "Well, you can't be serious about that. You must be kidding!" Everyone but Apiks laughed. "What's the name of the world again? I think I bumped my head during the ride." Apiks said wearily. He tried to use some of his magic, but he felt cut off. As if he was severed from his source of power. Jenny looked confused and answered, but in a mumble. Whatever it was, Apiks knew it wasn't the same as the one where he was just on... Or the one before it. He did it, and relief filled his face. Another world that he could protect and keep safe from the remnants of Ur and the spawn of Armok. NAV kept on driving the cart and then let out a cry. "I see it! The place we've waited so many months to get to! Thank Armok we're here!" Sprin laughed maniacally. He knew that Apiks remembered everything, just as he did.

And thus, a new chapter of the forumites began. The fallen sat in the afterlife and revelled in a great party that lasted until the end days. But Highmax and DwArfY couldn't stand it, and they watched as their old friend tried to fix everything... And then others came by and watched as well. Wolf, Esther, and even the mad Elephant Parade watched. They may return one day to that world to aid the Father in White, but not today. Today, Apiks grabbed his pick and slammed it into the ground. As his ancestors told him and as tradition goes, he pulled it back out and raised it into the air as he let out a cry that made the fallen heroes cheer and celebrate again.

***STRIKE THE EARTH!***